







## **ROME OR DEATH**







At the convention of Naples, greeting given to Benito Mussolini and Michele Bianchi  
(in the lead)

# **ROME OR DEATH**

**The Story of Fascism**

BY

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**Illustrated**



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**PART I**  
**'BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS**



# ROME OR DEATH

## CHAPTER I

### CIVIL STRIFE

MILAN may well boast of having more hurdy-gurdies than any other city in the world. Civil strife has not silenced them. A young cavalry officer from my *pension*, quite resplendent in his blue, red-striped pantaloons and shiny black leggings, was guiding me down a slot of a street near the Porta Venezia in that city when the rollicking, Old-World tune of "Funiculi, Funicula," floated around a corner. Picking our way in the shadow of the high grimy tenements and across a garbage-cluttered space beside a small church, we came upon a smeary bambino dancing hilariously in the gutter. The officer pointed with his *bastone* at a small yellowed poster above the frowsy head of the woman turning the crank. I read:

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Proletariat: 300 of your comrades were killed in this street during the past fourteen months by Fascisti and Royal Guards.

While I was still marveling, my companion grasped my arm and shoved me roughly into an inky charcoal-shop. A file of Fascisti, with heavy loaded canes, swung around the corner, singing their quickstep, "Giovanezza, Giovanezza." As though a button had been pressed, the doors of the dark little wine-shops and dingy, clattering *trattorie* literally exploded. Communists, who fell upon the Fascisti with fists, knives, and revolvers.

The conflict ebbed and flowed and swirled around the barrel-organ. A show-window went smash. Isolated combatants rolled in the black mire at our doorway, clutching for each other's throats.

Presently some one raised a cry, "Guardia Regia!" A platoon of olive-green uniforms and gray iron helmets swept into view. A few sporadic shots, the scurrying of many feet, and the disturbance ended, like a tropic thunder-shower, as precipitately as it had begun.

Emerging cautiously from the charcoal shop, I caught a glimpse of a laughing bambino

crawling from under the organ, and a group of battered and disheveled Fascisti beating a retreat around the corner. The only mortal casualty was a donkey that had been hitched to a wine-cart over whose twitching carcass a runty raccoon-faced Neapolitan wept copiously. As we passed on I heard the rollicking strains of "Funiculi, Funicula," and, glancing back, saw the bambino dancing hilariously in the gutter.

Our room, overlooking the Piazza Venezia, proved better than box-seats at a series of performances which at that early date still possessed novelty. The communists and Fascisti fought a number of pitched battles beneath our eyes, two of the victims being a woman in her final month of confinement and a servant-girl shaking out a rug on a distant *terrazzo*. And one night, about eleven o'clock, our window puffed inward with a terrific roar when the bomb-explosion occurred in the Diana Kursaal Theater across the way, a roar that brought my wife out of a sound sleep, feet to the floor. For two hours of bawling confusion, the police medical corps was carrying out the dead and wounded, bumping through an unregulated lane of ~~excited~~ bystanders. In Florence, eight months afterward, I was in a movie-house

when the audience stampeded to the exits at a false cry of "Bomb!" and my imagination was stabbed with the horror I had witnessed in Milan. •The same night as the explosion, in the latter city, the new million-lire Socialist headquarters was destroyed, the various meeting-places of the *sindacati* or labor-unions were invaded, and an unsuccessful attack made upon the Anarchist paper "La Umanità Nuova." From Florence came the news of the erection of Communist barricades in the Oltrarno district; from Puglia, an account of a peasant uprising; from Triest, the report of the burning of twenty-five million dollars' worth of lumber in the San Marco yards. Pisa, Siena, Ancona, Cremona, and other cities were disturbed by similar violence. This was in March, 1921.

The same month was also featured by the occupation of many public buildings, especially in Milan and Rome, by the mutilated war veterans demanding government employment. In Milan they seized the post and telegraph building. The employees were not badly molested, but many windows were broken, and mail from the general delivery was emptied out of the compartments and scattered over the floor. The Royal Guards made no attempt to

dislodge the demonstrators, but merely formed ineffectual cordons about the front entrances of the post-office and the Banca d'Italia, directly opposite. Nor was any interference made with the rationing of the demonstrators by outsiders. No one seemed particularly worried that the mail could not be delivered or telegrams handled. The occupation of the post-office was accepted by the public with a shrug and the much abused exclamation, "*Pazienza!*" As I was quite without funds at the time, owing to the delay of a long-expected draft, my personal feelings were not so charitable. In the end, the Government effected a compromise and numerous additions were made to the already overcrowded staff. I finally received a welcome envelope stained with water and cancelled with half-moon indentations from the hobnails of an unknown boot.

When I went to Bologna several months later to make a first-hand investigation of the agrarian situation, I found myself in the midst of an open Peasant-Fascist land war, which for nearly three years has been more intense than the struggles in any other part of the country. The scenario-writer who piloted me around that medieval university town and through its endless miles of shadowy polychromatic arcades

warned me: "If you see a fight start, or hear a revolver-shot, dive for the nearest doorway or drop in your tracks. The blood of Romagna is hot."

Toward the end of 1921, when on a walking tour in central Italy, I was overtaken on the *strada maestra* to Prato-in-Toscana by three hurtling lorries, crammed with Fascisti (in black shirts, orange collars, red stocking-caps, knickers, and leggings) all headed for the clothing-mills in the same town. When I finally arrived, they had worked their mischief: plastered posters over the Palazzo Communale, or city hall, inside and out, maltreated several officials of the labor *sindacato*, and raided their headquarters. The town was in a vivid state of gesticulation, and when I wished to find the caretaker of the civic museum that I might look at Filippino Lippi's famous Madonna, I had to bribe two red-tailed *carabinieri* to help me get to him in a dense and loquacious throng wedged between Pietro Tacca's fountain and the Pretorian Palace.

Many times since, I have witnessed smaller frays, and in many a town have heard, on clear nights, the echo of marching feet across deserted piazzas and beneath arches where must have

passed the mercenary soldiers of medieval *condottieri*. Many a night since, I have heard the blood-quicken<sup>g</sup> song, "Giovanezza, giovanezza . . ." or the old Roman battle-cry: "*Eja . . . eja . . . eja . . . alalà*," which perhaps the legions of Cæsar hurled against the Gauls in the forests of the Seine. Most of the Fascisti at that time were young men—I have seen the average age given as twenty-three—and this lust for night-prowling and night-violence has been, in part, an unavoidable legacy of the war, of marches beneath the black windy sky, and long wakeful nights in the starlit trenches; in part, a primeval passion for the dark, the restlessness of overwrought nerves, and the call that the mystery of warm southern nights makes to every living creature and which the proverbial Italian mandolin-playing no longer satisfies.

Traveling through the country, one can scarcely believe that this feudal bitterness is at work. The vineyards and olive-orchards of Tuscany, flanked by their slim cypress-trees, look half wild as they have always looked; but they are being cared for, seemingly by contented people. The fields of the Po valley stretch away in an endless green and brown panorama

of flax and barley and wheat and alfalfa. The littorals of the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Sea are richly cultivated; peasants are at work; crops are being harvested.

Or, passing down the avenues of any Italian city, one observes that the people have good clothes and plenty of ready money. The cafés are jammed at all hours, day and night. The wine-shops are always noisy. The arcades are peopled by animated promenaders. Only in Madrid have I seen such daytime idling as features the cities of Italy.

Of course, violence in Italy must be properly discounted. In few countries could a virtual civil war take place without irresistibly sweeping into its vortex the bulk of the population. But here violence is a more or less normal means of expressing public opinion in an imperfect democracy. Piazza demonstration runs back to the days of the Roman republic; it is the old form of popular assembly, the tradition of the *comitium*, the *vox populi*, of the great gatherings on the Capitoline Hill and in the more modern Campidoglio. In medieval times such strife was commonplace, as in Florence during the heyday of the city's imperial culture and greatness. The custom prevailed of calling the

citizens, into the Piazza Signoria, beneath the grim, overhanging Ghibbeline battlements of the Palazzo Vecchio, by means of the *vacca*, that bell whose deep lowing still sends a thrill of dark portency along the spine of the hearer. And rarely indeed did these popular assemblies fail to end in fist-cuffs and mortal combat, even in revolution. It was, and is, a crude but more or less reliable way of determining the most vigorous political—minority. A more recent precedent exists in the meteoric career of Garibaldi—"seven men on seven mules going to capture a kingdom." And since Unification such violence and piazza demonstrations have been frequent and often serious. The most casual historic recollection will identify many of the characteristics of this post-war period with those of the hectic years from 1898 to 1900 which culminated in the assassination of King Humbert.

And when revolution does occur, as in October, 1922, it is hastily and sentimentally patched over with the rags of constitutionalism. All the old office-grabbers and bureaucrats flock to the new stand to declare their "lifelong" devotion to Fascism.

Yet violence is always symptomatic—con-

ditioned by the play of antagonistic social forces; a confession of governmental inability, or unwillingness, to cope with economic and political crises. It represents the inevitable degeneracy of democracy in a period of difficult transition.

The paradox is: violence is sterile, purely reactionary; its benefits are by-products. Fascism has come into power with the theory, "Violence to end violence." That idea was born of Italian needs, but its roots are European; they strike down into the dark subsoil of revolution, syndicalism, and militarism.

## CHAPTER II

### EUROPE AND THE RISORGIMENTO

**S**CARTELÉY any period in the history of Europe has been so stormy as that from the capture of the Bastille in 1789 down to the present time. Following the overthrow of Napoleon, two powerful aspirations molded European politics: national unity and political democracy. These ideals were cross-cut by two other forces, imperialism and socialism, while all four were complicated by questions of racial autonomy. The first two, nationalism and democracy, represented belated applications of the doctrines of Machiavelli and Rousseau respectively. Imperialism was a natural concomitant of industrialization; socialism represented a dogmatic and at the same time visionary embodiment of the hopes of the French communists, Saint-Simon and Fourier, and, more directly, of the mechanistic doctrines of Karl Marx. The progress of national and racial consciousness,

coupled with the spirit of liberal evolution, was exemplified in the rise of Serbia, Belgium, Greece, and Germany; the development of class-consciousness, by the formation and rapid international extension of the various workmen's associations. These confused hopes culminated in that jumbled inchoate outburst known as the '48.

United Italy was the posthumous child of that upheaval. Actually the beginnings of a real faith in the idea of national unity had been implanted at the time of the establishment of the kingdom of Italy under a Bonaparte. And when the kingdom collapsed the discharged officers formed a secret organization, known as the Carbonari, to agitate for a new Italy. All during the next half-century, the miniature states of the peninsula were repeatedly upturned by revolutions, and more than one petty despot fled temporarily from his throne. And, as elsewhere in Europe, the two currents of democracy and nationalism culminated in the '48—only to be crushed under heel again by autocratic reaction.

When they revived, democracy was inextricably linked, by the leadership of Mazzini and Garibaldi, with the proletarian movement. Po-

political nationalism, under the guiding genius of pudgy, spectacled Cavour, was hopelessly compromised with the diplomatic intrigue of the ambitious imperial governments of the north. The conservative elements of the Risorgimento desired representative institutions and limited monarchy. The Carbonari and other revolutionary societies advocated pure democracy. With regard to the form of unification, one element desired a federal government; another, a centralized Italy—to both the question of republicanism versus monarchy was a matter of indifference.

And still another group-interest operated to separate the lovers of a united Italy: the church. Some writers, such as Gioberti, and even Mazzini at one time, advocated an Italy united under the Vatican, an end also pushed by the papal secretary, Rossi—a glamourous idea of a new Holy Empire.

Three tendencies, then, for brevity describable as nationalistic, revolutionary, and Catholic, were at work. And this same tripartite division gives us the key to the politics of the most recent post-war period and partially explains the rise of Fascism.

It is doubtful whether the great minds that

created Italy were fully aware of the immense gulf between themselves and the lower classes, or that they realized the terrible conditions of the peasantry ground down by centuries of foreign oppression and by papal misgovernment, or how the country had been debased by its numerous, petty, self-seeking rulers. After 1870, all the innate depravity that the preceding centuries of misery had generated rose up to mock the Italy that would be free and great. The corruption, incapacity, and disunity of the earlier period made their fortress the new state itself. The country was soon disrupted by factionalism and regionalism, and the treasury of the Government was sucked dry by greedy office-grabbers and sodden plunderers. Elections were, and are, conducted upon the spoils-system, and Sir John Goldenmouth's grease of Boccaccian fame has always played an unctuous part. The poorly mixed cement, which ~~had~~ gone into the building of the new political house, fell out, leaving the bare bricks of a miserable past. Thus all the energetic forces that had made united Italy, except the liberal-conservative party of Cavour and the house of Savoy, were forced into antagonistic rôles. The

Nationalist movement was projected as a virile anti-governmental crusading movement. The Catholics settled into sullen political abstention. The revolutionists laid the foundations for a proletarian movement. All hoped to overthrow the Government they had helped to create.

The Nationalists retained their earlier disorderly, radical, and militant characteristics. They adopted the syndicalist dogmas of violence. They boldly acknowledged their debt to Bakunin and particularly to Fernand Felloutier and Georges Sorel. They took over the syndicalist phraseology bag and baggage, attempting to infuse it with a nationalistic content. Said Enrico Corradini, the most outstanding Italian Nationalist theorist, fully a decade ago:

Just as socialism has redeemed the proletariat, so nationalism will be our method of redemption from France, Germany, England, North and South America, who are our bourgeoisie. Just as the methods of socialism are strife, and they look to the general strike to emancipate them from exploitation, so the methods of nationalism must be war, or the preparation for war. Nationalism is the logical outgrowth of socialism. The National-

ists have taken up the struggle where the Socialists left off. But, of course, the Nationalist ideal is a greater one: instead of a class, the whole nation; instead of the bourgeoisie, the world.

In short, it is necessary to recognize two spheres of distribution, one small, the other large; the smaller sphere is the nation with its distribution between class and class by means of the struggle of organized classes using the strike and the lock-out; the second sphere is the world with its distribution between nation and nation, in the international struggle for markets, colonies, navies and armies.

The immediate aims of the pre-war Nationalist movement were twofold: to strengthen the Italian state, and complete the process of unification by the annexation of the Austrian territory on the north and east littorals of the Adriatic, including Dalmatia. Irredentism was the constant fuel of the Nationalist movement. Its strongest centers were in the Austrian cities, Triest, Fiume, Zara. The activities of the Italian nationals on Austrian soil were loud and disorderly. They martyred themselves in every possible way, at the same time hurling imprecations at the corrupt Italian Government in order to stir up sentiment in the home-land. Their efforts invited stern Austrian repression. Ital-

ian-speaking schools were prohibited. Italian-language newspapers were suppressed. Dante clubs were broken up. Italian lecturers were arrested or driven away.

Meanwhile, the syndicalist movement was developing, expanding; and although many proletarian radicals were also interested in the Irredentist movement, the differences between the old comrades in arms seemed unbridgeable. Their only common ground: opposition to the amorphous Liberal party founded by Cavour; later, to the inefficient and demoralizing Democratic bureaucracy of Giolitti. For tactical reasons, the syndicalist movement, during the time of the repression of Premier Crispi in the last decade of the nineteenth century, joined hands with either the Anarchists or the Socialist party. The pre-war Socialist party was, however, preëminently middle-class and political. The great war broke this illogical Socialist-Syndicalist alliance, united direct-action syndicalism and nationalism, isolated the Socialist party.

With war, the old flames of nationalism leaped to new life. Italy was embarked upon a Santa Guerra to recover her historic boundaries. Nineteen fourteen saw the expulsion of

Benito Mussolini from the Socialist party; it saw the repledging of what, for convenience, may be termed the syndicalist-nationalist alliance for the first time since the Italian army battered down the Roman walls at Porta Pia in 1870. Patriotism, war, military emprise—these recreated the spirit, the singleness of purpose, of the Risorgimento.

As were the post-unification Nationalists and the post-unification working-class elements, so the Clerical groups, following the Risorgimento, were opposed to the new Italian Government. Following instructions from the Holy See, they refused to treat with the new Italian state which had wrenched Rome, the eternal city, from the papacy. They held strictly aloof from all political connections, carried on an assiduous propaganda through the confessional and the press, and built up their lay organizations for the day when the Savoyard monarchy should fall.

We thus have, in the Italy of the post-war, the tripartite grouping of the Risorgimento in a slightly modified form: Nationalism plus Syndicalism; international revolutionary Socialism; and Clericalism. In contrast to these three living tendencies, and playing a rôle corresponding to the decrepit feudal régimes antecedent to

## THE RISORGIMENTO, 21

the Risorgimento, we had the doddering bureaucracy with its discredited system of diplomacy whose exponents were Orlando, Giolitti, Nitti, Bonomi, Facta.

## CHAPTER III

### THE POST-WAR

**G**IOSUE CARDUCCI, the most sturdy poet of the post-unification period, regarded modern Europe as an old and rotting harridan, covering her wrinkles with meretricious cosmetics. It is easy, now, to realize what a rocky piece of furniture was the pre-war régime. The thin veneer of nineteenth-century political democracy laid upon the European wardrobe of racial worm-holes, feudal and aristocratic cracks, and bourgeois warping, to make it look good as new, merely served to conceal impending collapse. Class-antagonisms and the fundamental maladjustment of the industrial system were glossed over. Industrialism is the heritage of the Occident; but the factory system is world-wide in its ramifications, and Europe was and is jarringly national. The political and financial order was and is thoroughly inadequate to answer the needs of international commerce or

international culture. Industrialism smashed through the superstructure of suave humanitarianism, diplomatic deceit, and inefficient democracy. The machine demanded intelligence and scientific control from its supposed masters. The old order of lawyers and professional propagandists, seated in parliaments far removed from the actual work of the world, dies hard. These decadent elements of our unnecessary political democracy were partly responsible for the world struggle; they—not as individuals, but as a class—are largely responsible for the armed peace instituted by the Treaty of Versailles, which has injured the world far more than the war. Instead of a reviving Europe, we are threatened with a Europe which promises to expire in a series of revolutionary and militaristic convulsions. The dragon's teeth of continuous international war have been sown in civil strife.

Civil strife is the norm of present-day Europe; the factors that keep it within bounds are fear or exhaustion or both. Bad enough that Europe, having for half a century and more promoted a commerce at the expense of the world and for the elevation of her own instead of international culture, should have committed slow suicide by

increasingly cutting herself off from the sources of food-supply and raw materials, a process that has since been aggravated by the class, national, and racial shifts resulting from the war.

All of these generalizations hold for Italy—politically, intellectually, and spiritually the youngest of the important western nations. Because of her youth, and other more obvious economic reasons, these besetting problems touch Italy more emotionally but perhaps less fundamentally than any of the other powers. The coming rise of this nation, which may result in her seizure of the hegemony of the Mediterranean, runs counter to the general decline of Europe. The aggressive spirit of expansion, corked up in Italy's rapidly increasing population, has been called forth, in part, as a reaction to the chaos of Europe. It results, also, from the shift of the commercial focus of the world to the Orient, which has given a new importance to the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, Italy's itch for power is as unreasonable, at the present hour of constantly decreasing production, as that of the European proletariat. Her youth smacks of the sophomoric; she is the spendthrift of a ruined family. Fascism is

an expression of this new, irrational Italy.

Yet Italy is an exaggerated push-cart. Who forgets this fails to understand Italy. She has no important natural resources—no iron, no coal, no petroleum, no cotton—her one industrial asset, water-power in Lombardy and central Italy. Every year the country must import some eleven million tons of coal, a million and a half tons of coal-oil and gasolene, more than a million tons of petroleum, two million quintals of cotton, a million and a half tons of wood. Hence Italy can never be thoroughly industrialized. She must remain the exaggerated push-cart. The two classes between the shafts are the *contadini*, or peasantry, and the *piccola borghesia*, or small trading and shopkeeping class. To remain sturdily peasant and lackadaisically tradesman, this would seem to be Italy's immediate destiny. The degenerate aristocracy, the upper middle class, and the proletariat must be considered, the first as a shadow of three centuries of Italian abasement, the last two as a part of a disturbing infusion of industrialism essentially alien to the Italian genius, though, as a result of the war, exercising a disproportionate, aggressive power. On the other hand, the *piccola borghesia* has been

partially dislocated and scourged into political consciousness.

In the United States the term "middle class" has a vague connotation of hardwood floors, framed "Saturday Evening Post" covers, neat front-yard lawns, and an automobile. But in Italy it has a precise meaning and signifies precise economic relationships. The small bourgeoisie in the Italian towns and cities—the small shopkeeper, the small trader—is sharply differentiated. And while the line between this group and the peasant, and even more the proletariat, is fairly well marked, between it and the upper middle classes and the aristocracy yawns an almost uncrossable gulf. These small urban bourgeoisie have immediate contacts. They comprise an excitable yet easy-going group, content to dawdle around their dirty, kerosene-lighted, cubbyhole shops, to educate their children sufficiently to see that their sons obtain government sinecures or become priests and that their daughters marry a bit above their own station. Both these people and the peasants are restive. The peasants are demanding land, change, better conditions, but the very nature of their work and the lack of good

roads and communication limits their contacts except in certain parts where, on account of malaria or bandits, they must herd in the villages on the mountain-tops. Thus at the present time the ballast of Italian politics is the small bourgeoisie.

This class made up the strength of the pre-war Socialist movement and the various reform groups. This class, and to a lesser extent the peasants, formed the backbone of Giolitti's inefficient, parasitical, but liberal-minded bureaucracy. This class was responsible for the corrupt and lackadaisical pre-war system. For these reasons the earlier governments made Socialist concessions, subsidized Socialist and Catholic coöperatives, and pursued a policy of non-intervention in industrial disputes. And the *piccola borghesia* contributed most, financially and morally, to the war. From this group were drawn most of Italy's five hundred thousand dead. And it was this group which has suffered most since the Carthaginian peace of Versailles was signed.

The *piccola borghesia*, after peace was declared, was crushed between the thrusts of the revolutionary proletariat and the *pescicani*, or war profiteers. Their businesses were injured by

the dumping of war-goods (American shoddy and Armour's tinned meats not being excluded); and their standards were cut down by the boycott of the cities by the organized peasants and by the rapid rise of the cost of living to six times that of 1914.

Furthermore, the last seven years have seen a new semi-middle-class group rise to importance, comprised of the skilled worker. The accelerated expansion of Italian industry during the war increased the ranks of this new group, and, owing to the depleted labor supply, increased its economic importance. There arose a trained proletariat as far or farther removed economically from the levels of the ordinary day-worker as is the small bourgeoisie itself. This new group sought to control the Socialist party and to convert it from its old program of social reform to that of proletarian revolution, to bring Karl Marx out from the dusty cubbyhole shops into the factory where they asserted he rightfully belonged.

The Socialist party, suddenly swollen to three times its pre-war strength, became the arena for three antipathetic groups: the new skilled proletariat, the old lower middle class, and the peasants. Under normal conditions these con-



The *bête noire* of Italian politics, Abbé Luigi Sturzo



flicting interests might have been reconciled or compromised; but, plunged into the post-war with its fierce competitive struggles, the Socialist party was doomed, sooner or later, to collapse.

The active directive strength of the Socialist party was proletarian and revolutionary, as events later proved; but for two years internal tension was subordinated to a disciplined effort to seize control of industry and government, and was restrained by the bitter opposition of other popular, ambitious political and economic groups with less radical psychology.

Close on the heels of the Socialist party, bidding for public support, came the Popular party organized by Don Luigi Sturzo in 1919. It shunted the old intransigent Catholic sentiment upon the siding of social reform, hitched it up to the express-train of general discontent, and landed a hundred representatives in the national Chamber and its most capable leaders in the cabinet.

Out of the war-alliance of Syndicalists and Nationalists sprang Fascism. Fascism, a spirit of post-war restlessness incarnate, was directed into organized channels by the leaders of the two direct-action movements. One other factor contributed, the aroused fear of the dislocated middle class of the cities, obliged during three years

of armed peace to fight for its very existence. The idle, unemployed sons of this class, who returned from the trenches expecting to be promptly rewarded with governmental sinecures, constituted the flying squadrons of the Fascisti, carrying on destructive sorties and occupying the public buildings. Three elements, then, Nationalism, Syndicalism, and a middle class made militant, were harried by the difficult post-war into the one Fascist movement.

Thus the tripartite subdivision of the Socialist party had its analogue in the larger national arena, where was also occurring a tripartite struggle. This struggle is traditional, and was roughly represented by Socialist-Communist parties, the Popular party, and the Fascisti. The one question from the beginning of the post-war was, not who should be the next minister, but which of the three groups should come to control Italian destinies? Which group should undertake the making or the breaking of the new Italy?

The years 1919–20 will be numbered among the most critical years in Italian history. Perverse destiny focused in those two years every force making for national ruin. The direct unsettling influence of the war and the Versailles

Peace were then most in evidence. The war had created a state of mind sharply revolutionary, even in people traditionally conservative. For, more than the war with Turkey in 1911, it tore up the sleepy regionalism that had existed in Italy after the struggle for unification had been brought to a close. To both peasant and proletariat, at home and in the trenches, it brought improved diet and standards of living. At the same time it exposed both elements to the shifting world tendencies and opened new channels for radical propaganda. And nearly all classes chafed both at the unaccustomed military discipline and at the gross inefficiency with which the war was conducted by the Government. The Italian people did not submit gracefully to militarism, and when peace came a wide-spread hatred flared up against the officers. Train-crews refused to carry men in uniform; lone officers were set upon and cruelly beaten, even killed. In Florence I saw a chance street throng jeering at a first lieutenant who, having been flung from his bicycle, was staggering about half blinded by the blood streaming from his face.

The full significance of the Russian revolution drifted across the Alps, heralding a new era. Demobilization was carried out with no adequate

provision for the employment of the ex-combatants; the army was thrown back into civil life overnight. Soldiers discovered people at home had grown prosperous. They learned that the most extreme favoritism and bribery had vitiated the efficiency of conscription and of every governmental department. Demobilization also resulted in a wide-spread population shift into the cities. The disaster of Caporetto had driven thousands of refugees south along the Adriatic littoral and to Milan, Florence, Rome, and other cities. Subsequent financial collapse was later to bring about unruly shifts in the industrial population. This restlessness and inter-contact of different groups from diverse parts of the country having striking differences in psychology and customs all contributed to the general unrest, broke down standards and morals, and increased crime, wastefulness, and high living. The new businesses springing up in Italy are the cafés, the moving-picture houses, the theaters, candy factories; the most flaring advertisements are for expensive alcoholics. Simultaneously the cost of living mounted alarmingly; the depreciating lira made and still makes any great improvement in this direction unlikely.

At the same time came the repercussions from

the Peace of Versailles. In Italy a general strike in protest at this betrayal of the world was applauded even by some of the industrialists, and by the Nationalists, the war-makers, and the diplomats, with little thought as to what the precedent might entrain. The machinations of England and France against Italy under the cloak of Wilsonian idealism not only served to discredit the United States in the eyes of Italians but awoke the people to the incapacity of their own governing classes. The attitude of the people developed into utter contempt when the inefficiency, so glaring during the war, degenerated into utter disorganization of the public services. •The transacting of public business required endless red tape, simony, and pull. To telephone was well nigh impossible. The postal service was in chaos; the deficit of posts, telephones, and telegraphs was half a billion lire a year. Strikes and lock-outs multiplied. White strikes paralyzed the government industries. The hampering of transportation and production by disorderly elements even took the complexion of petty spite. Passengers had no assurance that they might not be suddenly abandoned in the midst of a deserted country-side. Shipping regulations and tariffs'

were impractical and annoying.' Involved regulations largely absolved the train officials from all responsibility for loss or thefts, which were notoriously frequent. Yet in spite of the rigmarole necessary to obtain damages, the railroads were forced in 1920-21 to pay for theft, loss, and retarded shipments indemnities 3000 per cent greater than were paid in 1913-14.<sup>1</sup> And all the time the railway deficit, even excluding the sums being spent on reconstruction, for the building of new lines, the electrification of new roads, was mounting alarmingly—to a billion lire, to a billion and a half . . .

If labor discontent was one form of reaction to the post-war economy and the breakdown of the Government, equally so was the rise of the Fascist movement and the meteoric descent of d'Annunzio and his legionaries upon Fiume.

The only answer of the Italian Government to these disturbing symptoms was to raise procrastination and inefficiency to the *n*th power. The minds of the war diplomats still moved in the sultry atmosphere of petty intrigues, paid propaganda, patronage, suave compromise, and tricky evasion. And the very tradition of Italian liberalism, its hypocritical humanitarian-

<sup>1</sup> Pier Occhini, "La Crisi Agraria," p. 84.

ism and paternalism, and yet its fundamental interest in conserving its power by concessions to every strong or violent faction had softened the social and moral fibers of the country, never at any time very tough. This liberal bourgeois Government, which had bartered away the country's peace to the highest bidder, which had failed to conduct the war effectively, which had failed to secure either an enlightened or, on the other hand, a frankly selfish solution of affairs at the peace table, now became utterly incapable of dealing with a socially distraught nation, whose centrifugal forces were threatening a disruption of the state itself.

Overnight the Socialist party leaped to a commanding position; overnight the newly created Clerical party, a party of mild Christian socialism, wrenched away a hundred seats in the Chamber of Deputies on a platform of "land for the peasants," bureaucratic reform, social legislation, and the Wilsonian Fourteen Points. The membership of the organized labor movements, Catholic and Socialist, jumped from thousands to millions.

All these disturbing tendencies, including the Fiumian imbroglio, came to a head at the time of the land and factory seizures of 1920. These

were precipitated by the employers in the metal trades, who, after refusing a 20 per cent increase in wages and after suffering from a prolonged White strike that had seriously curtailed the output of the factories, declared a lock-out. This lock-out was answered by a syndicalist call for a lock-in. As this proved temporarily successful and the Government offered no determined armed opposition, a wave of revolutionary fervor swept over the country. Seizure of other factories followed; groups of renters commandeered the houses of their landlords; peasants squatted upon the lands of absentee proprietors. And, even where factories were not taken over, the *sindacati* availed themselves of the crisis to force better terms upon the employers, who were willing to grant almost anything in order to prevent the spread of the movement. Thus the powerful peasant land leagues of the north completely gained the upper hand in imposing their demands upon the proprietors. In Sicily and southern Italy, in localities where the lands were not seized, the landlords promptly modified the rental contracts.

But the movement was doomed to failure, not because of the Fascisti, who had yet to cut their

eye-teeth, nor because of the moderation of Premier Giolitti (although this was important), but because of the inherent difficulties involved. The Socialist leaders themselves sounded the bugle for retreat. They were cognizant of the following facts:

1. The first week of the factory seizures had made great inroads upon the supplies of raw materials.
2. No selling organizations existed, and no purchasers could be found for finished products.
3. Adequate funds were lacking for buying raw materials or for paying wages.
4. After the first enthusiastic days, many of the locked-in men began to lose heart and to desert their posts.
5. The seizures had broken exchange values so that it required more than twenty-nine lire to buy an American dollar.
6. All shipments to Italy from foreign countries were held up.
7. Evidence was not lacking that the powers would promptly blockade a revolutionary government.
8. No assurances were being made by French or English labor of practical concerted support of the Italian revolutionary movement.

On September 19, 1920, the premier, Signor Giolitti, invited the representatives of the industrial federation to discuss the situation with the Labor Alliance. No agreement was at first possible. The workers submitted a well drawn constructive plan for initiating democratic management in the factories. The owners submitted a short vague alternative of a few hundred words in length.

Premier Giolitti thereupon presented the draft of a bill, which, if both parties should be agreeable, he volunteered to submit to Parliament. This compromise was the draft of the much-abused Controllo Act, which was to mark, according to Premier Giolitti, a new stage in Italian industrial life. The workers would henceforth collaborate in running industry. This act would have created in every factory and every industry joint committees of workers, technical experts, and employees, whose so-called "control" was to have the following scope (Article 1) :

1. To arrange that the workers should become cognizant of the operating conditions of the industry.
2. To promote the improvement of technical

instruction and of the moral and economic conditions of the workers within the limits allowed by the operating conditions of the industries.

3. To insure the execution of all laws enacted for the protection of the workers.
4. To counsel improvements for the increase of production which may tend to promote greater economy.

5. To render the relations between employees and employers increasingly normal and pacific.

True, the workers were to have been in overwhelming majority upon these committees, and the representatives of the employers and the technicians were largely seated to provide information; but, on the other hand, the committees were to have had no administrative power, no actual control. Their function was purely investigatory, the aim to educate the workers to a better understanding of the conditions of the industry. The act was criticized in some quarters because it did not provide for organic bodies with a larger measure of direct power. But it should be recalled that the Italian workers are mostly illiterate, that the gulf between them and the educated and technical classes is probably greater than in

any other important country except Russia.

The Controllo Act, had it been promptly submitted to the Chamber of Deputies and made into a law, would perhaps have allayed much social discontent and proved a starting-point for an enlightened and evolutionary solution of the problem of class antagonism that was tearing Italy asunder; it might conceivably have changed the direction of the Fascist movement.

The solution with regard to the land seizures was more directly efficacious. In southern Italy the peasants directed their activities against absenteeism and a pernicious system of farm administration by *gabellotti*, or farm-usurers, which will be subsequently described; and the Chamber promptly legalized the seizures pending the passage of legislation which would make all idle lands accessible. The peasants were thus immediately successful.

The close of 1920, therefore, marks a great decisive point in the hurried events of the post-war. It marks the culmination of revolutionary strength. It coincides with the collapse of bloated Italian industry. It coincides with the disillusionment of the Italian workers with regard to Russia. It coincides with the lowest

moment of Italian prestige in the eyes of Europe and the United States. It heralds the beginning of proletarian disorganization. It institutes a reaction of the traditional groups, the peasants and the lower middle class. It indicates the first thorough renovation of those two classes and their first real attainment of efficient political consciousness. And, lastly, this moment saw the rapid rise of Fascism and its unification on a truly national scale. From this time on, a new tendency is observable. Not only do we see the resurgence of Italy the pushcart, but the rise of a new Italy of incalculable potentialities, seeking not only to adjust itself effectively to the changed Europe, the Europe of disaster, but to reorganize its national life for the purpose of further advance in the Mediterranean sphere.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY ACTIVITIES

**I**N the summer of 1921, the Fascisti ordered all retailers to cut prices 20 per cent. Most dealers immediately posted signs:

**THIS STORE COMPLIES WITH THE FASCIST ORDER; ALL GOODS 20% BELOW MARKED PRICES**

Recalcitrants were promptly caned into submission. In Florence, where I was living at the time, the price of show-case-glass and window-glass went up. Reduced schedules were also imposed for butter, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. I saw several old men and one old woman kicked and caned and their cart-loads of garden-stuff trampled into the mire.

Such incidents provide the only key to the Fascist movement during the first year and a half of its existence. Fascism was at first a tendency, a symptom of social maladjustment,

a channel into which flowed the post-war malaise which could not find outlet in the Socialist and Popular parties. The Fascisti at that time called themselves the "backbone of Italy." Their tactical motto has been, "Hit first and find out afterward." Fascist direct action has not as a rule included the boycott, the strike, or sabotage. It is still more direct and primitive.

The first violence of this atavistic sort took place in Julian Venice, the annexed province, containing, according to the Austrian 1910 census, seven hundred thousand Germans, Slavs, and other aliens. These new Italian citizens, disturbed by the political changes, fearful of the future, and anxious to cling to their original nationalities, were coerced by roving bands of discharged *arditi*, or shock-troops, who often acted in concert with the occupational army division. The first demonstration of importance by an actual Fascist unit of which I find newspaper record was the burning of the Narboni Dom, the headquarters of the Slav nationalist organization in Triest, on July 13, 1920. However, for fully a year before this, occurred minor misdemeanors, such as beating up foreign residents, maltreating the teachers and pastors of foreign-language schools and

churches, invading private homes, etc. Throughout 1920 the anti-Slav and anti-German activities of the Fascisti became more open, and aroused riotous street demonstrations and newspaper protests in Zagreb and Belgrade. The Fascisti even drove aliens across the frontiers in the most barbarous manner; and during the Fiumian expedition, in which many Fascisti participated, the ill feeling constantly increased, resulting in a Fascist demonstration in Triest in December at the time of the downfall of d'Annunzio, a demonstration which had to be quelled by armed force. On February 8, 1921, the Fascisti invaded the offices of the nationalist Slav paper "Edinost," destroying subscription-lists and damaging the presses. On another occasion they destroyed the Slavic Hotel Balkan.

In the farming districts of the Adriatic delta region, in Puglia, Sicily, Sardinia, and elsewhere, the headquarters, newspaper offices, and coöperative stores of the agricultural leagues were pillaged and burned; the *capi-lega*—league officials—were beaten, doused, sequestered, even murdered. Deputy Maneotti, speaking before the Chamber during the early part of 1921, thus described the violence in the province of Rovigo:

Through village after village passed destruction, menace, terror, for all the sixty small communes of the Polesine. One by one, in the short space of three weeks, these were invaded in broad daylight by hundreds of turbulent maniacs, who beat up every one indicated by the local agrarian proprietors as being Socialists, and penetrated into headquarters, destroying furniture and lugging off objects; by night, masked groups, with rifles, shot recklessly down the streets or threw bombs, entered into the houses of members of municipal councils, or the officers of the Lega di Resistenza, a coöperative, or similar organization, and, to the indescribable terror of the women and children, threatened, maltreated, extorted statements, perpetrated shameful, unmentionable things, or obliged every one to fly desperately across the fields.

According to the "Critica Sociale" of June 15-30, between January 3 and May 9, 1921, there occurred in the province of Ferrara, forty-five Fascist sorties, featured by shooting, bomb-throwing, and assault on private homes; forty-two league and three labor-union headquarters valued at from two thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand lire were burned: and twenty-one radical communal administrations terrorized into resigning.

In the province of Rovigo in the space of

several months some four thousand persons were violently handled and three hundred houses burned.

On January 24, 1921, the Fascisti burned the Bologna Chamber of Labor. "That night," melodramatically wrote Enrico Corradini, the Nationalistic leader, "I saw the fortress of the enemy, the Chamber of Labor, disappear in flames. Cheering citizens assisted at the spectacle, while policemen, carbineers, guards, and soldiers, arms at rest, watched the flames devour the building."<sup>1</sup>

The common practice was for any number from a dozen to hundreds, even thousands, of Fascisti to cram into motor-trucks and make a descent upon the country-side or the villages. In localities known to be largely Socialistic or Communist, these bands fired right and left as they hurtled by, pumping their guns into the windows of private houses. Known leaders of the peasants were treated like one with whom I talked in Bologna.

His house is—or was—located about three miles from the city. About ten o'clock one evening in May, 1920, as he was going to bed, a heavy knocking resounded on the front door.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Edgar A. Mower, "Immortal Italy," p. 355.

"Who's there?"

"Open in the name of the police!"

Now, the proverb runs through all this district that "when the police knock, death enters."

Accordingly he refused to open, and the door was battered down. Some twoscore masked figures burst through. He was seized, questioned, kicked, his hands tied behind his back, a gag stuck in his throat. His wife and two girls were yanked from their beds and forced to go out on the road in their nightgowns. The house was searched, then burned. He was taken away in the auto-truck to a lonely spot near Ferrara, where he was stripped and bound to a tree that he might be tortured by the swarm of mosquitos that infest that low marshy country-side. His family was left on the country road, and his wife spent several weeks in the hospital. He was unable to obtain any police investigation or recompense.

The following affidavit by a former Fascist officer was translated from the "Avanti" by the New York "Nation" (December 20, 1922):

I went to Bologna in March, 1921, in the combat unit of the Fascisti. . . . After staying in Bologna two months, I was asked to go to Imola. . . . When I

had been in that city for one month without any ranking, I won the confidence of Count Flaminio Ginnasi, and, thanks to his influence, I was made one of the directors of the Imola unit. At that time, the directors were discussing the methods of violence to be used in getting rid of the heads of the organization, who were considered to be the backbone of working-class resistance, and I remember very well, without fear of contradiction, that sums varying from 10,000 to 15,000 lire for every man "eliminated" were placed at the disposal of those set to carry out these tasks. . . .

In October I was sent to Argenta, and with a letter from the Imola directors I called on Luigi Granata, political secretary of the unit there. I spent October and November at Argenta. One Sunday evening toward the end of October or the beginning of November, a squadron of Socialists from Lavezzola came to Argenta to hold a demonstration, which actually took place without any incident because Granata had ordered all the Fascisti not to leave their houses. Granata, however, sent a Fascist to Ferrara by motorcycle to inform the directors of the demonstrations what had taken place. Italo Balbo, accompanied by an officer named Beltrami, from Great Ulivi, and by another Fascist, came to Argenta a few hours afterwards to confer with Granata.

At 11 p. m. two buses arrived filled with Fascisti from various sections of the province of Ferrara, who were armed with muskets, bombs, and daggers, gasolene and

other inflammable materials. These men formed into squadrons and blocked up the town by guarding the roads of communication and refusing to let any one pass either way. Then at Balbo's command, the squadrons passed through the town shouting threats and provocation to the people. Naturally no one accepted their challenges. Nevertheless, Balbo ordered an ex-captain named Biasi and another officer named Forti to select two squadrons and send them into the suburb of Lenin. The squadrons entered the little village, and at the command of Forti and Balbo beat up every one they could lay their hands on (women, children, old men, etc.) and burned as much of the place as they could. Then they went back to Balbo, who ordered them to return home. During the whole scene of destruction the Commissioner of Public Safety, who is now at Massalombardia, looked on passively, taking no further action than to ask Balbo to withdraw the squadrons. . . .

At Massalombardia, where I served later, the Fascisti are paid 30 lire a day, with 500 lire for every successful action. The funds are provided by Torchi, da Turini, and an engineer named Giorgio Sangiorgi. I stayed at Massalombardia until about January 20. I found out also that when the squadrons there start out for action, they go to the house of a man named Pezzatoni, where there must be a tremendous quantity of arms, inasmuch as however many Fascisti there may be, there are always arms for all. From Massalombardia

I went to Bagnara, by order of Calvotti, secretary of the Ravenna provincial federation, to substitute for Pollini in the formation of the Economic Syndicate, and to organize a few Fascisti in the place. The object was, first of all, to eliminate Dino Golinelle and Beltrami Silvio, secretary of the Communist section. For this purpose Beltrami Pasqualino and his brother Cecchino, Messrs. Martini, Morosini, and the Della Guercia family deposited 10,000 lire with Giovannino Della Guercia at the Credito Romagnolo. . . . [He then goes on to tell how, instead of killing these men, he made friends with them. . . .]

I stayed in Imola during the whole month of April and from there I was sent to Mordano with definite instructions for carrying out action against the workers in Chiavica and Bubano, to make them leave their organizations.

In addition to this I was assigned the task of getting rid of the following men, with no limit set to the means to be employed: Francesco Pirazzini, alleged to have been involved in the murder of a Fascist named Solferini during the agrarian conflict, and who had recently been freed; Aurelio Bendanti and his brother Celso; the Pirizjoli brothers; Domenico Figua, who was in the same situation as Pirazzini; Lodovico Lanzoni and others, all of Bubano and Chiavica. Others on the list were Luigi Balducci, a Socialist living at Volte House, and Colonel Foschi, living on Via Fluno. The killing of these men was entrusted to me by the Imola

unit under the orders of Giovanni Solferini, living at Piazza Quaini in Imola, and his brothers in Bubano, who had definitely stated that they were prepared to make any sacrifice to see their brother's death avenged.

By May 30 I had not yet carried out my task, and went to the unit and declared that it was impossible for me to do so. Solferini then said that if I did not carry out my duty with regard to the persons mentioned above, I should head an expedition in grand style against the inhabitants of Ghiajica. The directors at Imola—Mentore Ravaglia, Amadeo Ferratini, Ario Fantini, Mario Negri, Count Flaminio Ginnasi, and Andrea Rocchi—all favored Solferini's proposition and gave me the necessary authority for carrying out the expedition.

For these purposes they presented me with a motorcycle and side-car, lent by the Golinelli Brothers, to enable me to get in touch with the units of Massalombardia, Conselice, Cotignola, Lugo, Bagnara, Mordano, and Bubano, and that evening were sent the forces I requested to a place that had been agreed upon. I, however, not only arranged things so that my action would not meet with success, but I warned the inhabitants of the locality which had been marked out, and most of them kept away from their homes that night, while the police force kept the Fascisti squadrons from entering the town. The following morning the motorcycle of the Golinelli picked me up at Mardano and took me to Imola, where I was to report on the results

of the expedition, which, of course, were quite negative. At 4:30 in the morning, I found Solferini, who was anxiously waiting me, and at the disconcerting news I gave him, he began to bemoan the money he had vainly spent amounting to approximately 1800 lire which he had put into my own hands. . . .

I was then called before the directors, who reported their final decision, entrusting me with one more confidential task, as a final proof of my standing with the Fascisti. The task consisted of assuming command of some squadrons of action composed of men from Bologna and on duty at Imola for the purpose of getting rid of Hon. Marabini and his son Andrea, Vespignani, Baronicini, Ciccolini, the proprietor of the Caffè de Commercio, etc. I objected that I had not the means to carry out such a task, and furthermore I would have to know the men I was to command. The next evening eight men were introduced to me and placed at my disposal. I should recognize them if I saw them again. They were staying at the Campana Inn, and ate at the Emilia restaurant. I then found out that they were supplied with the clothes of women, priests, and beggars, and with false mustaches, beards and wigs, to change their appearance as occasion demanded. The men entrusted to me had come from Bologna unarmed, and at my request, Count Flaminio Ginnasi asked me to his house to supply me with the necessary arms. I accepted his invitation, and that

evening I took my men to the Ginnasi mansion, and, one at a time, we were taken down into the cellar, where I saw a big cannon, a 37-mm. automatic gun, and an immense number of muskets and guns of all descriptions piled up in a confused heap. In another part of this cellar was heaped a quantity of ammunition. The musket, which I chose among the best, and which I am prepared to submit to government agents, has carved on the butt end the name of Count Della Volpe. The rest of my companions armed themselves with revolvers. When I questioned Count Ginnasi he told me that the cannon had been obtained from General Tamaia and brought into the place piece by piece. . . .

At the unit headquarters Solferini told me that 15,000 lire had been collected and deposited with Count Ginnasi and that when one of the above-named persons should be done away with it was to be used as a prize for the author of the act in addition to moral and financial support during the subsequent period of concealment. On the following day, Sunday, at the Caffè Sagnapino, a Fascist named Oreste Landi urged me to take action against Hon. Marabini, who would certainly go to the Chamber of Labor some time that morning; but since I did not feel like carrying out any act of violence against him, I went to Bagnara without taking any notice of what he had said. . . . As a result my place as commander was immediately given to a Fascist named Giuseppe Anconetani, who received from the

unit 30 lire a day in addition to payment for action. He brought the squadron which was to act against Marabini near the Chamber of Labor.

Just by chance Marabini fell into the hands of other Fascisti, who beat him up, so that the squadron had to renounce its criminal plan. My flight to Bagnara made the Fascisti suspicious, and, fearing because of the revelations I might make, they have led me a pitiless chase, though unsuccessful except for a little beating they succeeded in giving me. . . .

In full conscience of having spoken the truth, ready to support it at any time or before all, even at the cost of my life, I sign myself

VITTORIO FRANCESCO DI GIUSEPPE MANCINI,

Born at Nocera, Terrinese (Catanzaro).

The ire of the Fascisti was and is directed particularly against the Socialist and opposition press. In Milan I saw the results of the destruction of the "Avanti" and, in Reggio Emilia, the blackened office of the "Giustizia," wrecked on April 8, 1921. The presses were smashed, the type dumped over the floor, and the cases burned. Typewriters were demolished, books and records stolen or destroyed. One would have to go back to the San Francisco earthquake and fire to find similarly devastated and gutted interiors.

Elections have rarely been honest in Italy, but during these post-war years, with the exception of the general election of 1919, their purpose has been invariably defeated by armed violence. The election of May, 1921, was featured by direct aggression on the part of the supporters of the Fascist-Nationalist-Giolitti *blocco*. Opposition voters were terrorized or beaten up. The preëlection dead numbered more than two hundred; while the number seriously wounded exceeded five thousand. Criminal group attacks were organized in Umbria, Emilia, Tuscany, and other red provinces. Socialist, Communist, and even Clerical candidates were run out of their districts and kept out under threat. Notaries were browbeaten into refusing to sign anti-Fascist candidate lists. Under the Italian law each party provides its own ballots. The Fascisti captured and burned many opposition ballots just before the day of election so that no time remained to duplicate them. In Triest, Ferrara, and other localities the Socialists were kept from the ballot-boxes by force. In Bari the organized workers went to voting-places in compact military formation. Similar incidents occurred in Caviglia, in Florence, Fuorigrotta, Naples, Radicendoli, San

Severo. In Torre di Parenzo, San Domenico di Castellar, Grisigna, Umago, Protole, Stridone, and other towns of Istria, according to Slav and Socialist newspapers, the Fascisti took armed possession of the approaches to the polls; opposition poll-watchers were driven away; and voters were, in numerous instances, obliged to fill in their ballots in sight of the election judges. Only 20 per cent of the registered voters exercised their right. Arified battles occurred in Turin, Milan, Bari, Perugia, etc. At Perugia electoral secrecy was violated. At Castiglione del Lago the peasants were marched to the booths and obliged to vote in the proper fashion. Some towns were threatened with armed invasion should the vote for the Fascist candidates fall below a given percentage—threats which were later enforced. Both the Popular and Socialist parties afterward attempted to contest some of these elections; but the machinery for doing so is in full control of the minister in power, and nothing tangible was achieved.

Another feature of this violence was the forced resignation of local and provincial officials, who opposed Fascist activities. Thus in the province of Grosseto in the commune of Roccastrada, the *sindaco* received the follow-



Devastating the Typographical Workers' Hall



The last bonfire of the effects of the devastated "Paese" offices.  
This paper has never resumed publication



ing typical communication in April, 1920:

*Sindaco* of the Commune of Roccastrado:

Since Italy ought to be Italian it should not, therefore, be administered by individuals such as you . . . and I advise you to resign before April 17, warning you that in case you do not, you will be responsible for property and persons. And if you go to the police with this letter, my pious, gentle, and humane mayor, the time granted you will be reduced to Wednesday, the 18th, a figure which brings fortune.

DINO PERZONE CAMPAGNI.

Piazza Oltaviani 1, Florence, Fascio di Combattimento,  
di Firenze.

The *sindaco* did not resign. As a result, a rumor of a Fascist raid on the town came early in July, and many inhabitants took the precaution of sleeping in the fields. Before dawn of the given day, two trucks, loaded with Fascisti, fully armed and supplied with hand-grenades and incendiary materials, swept into the village. The house and business of Signor Bastiani, the *sindaco*, were devastated, as well as those of the assessors Nativi and Tagliaferri, and of the secretary of the local coöperative, Cucinelli. About nine o'clock, after drinking in the café, the Fascisti left town, but returned ten minutes later, one of their number having been shot

from ambush, the student Ivo Saletti, of Grosseto. The Fascisti sprang from their trucks, shooting at every person they saw, murdering ten citizens, and wounding more than a score. They then set fire to and destroyed other houses and businesses, all the time shooting at random. Fifteen houses were destroyed, and the terror lasted six hours.

In Emilia in the towns of Fabbrico, San Martino, Rio, Sliceto, Novallara, Rolo, Reggiolo, and other towns, the municipal officials were notified by letter to resign within a period of forty-eight hours. The Fascisti went in person to the council meetings to enforce their will. Those officials who absented themselves were rounded up and brought forcibly into the sessions in order that the resignations might be "strictly legal," though exacted in some instances at the point of a gun. In all of Italy thousands of popularly elected officials were obliged to resign.

Up to June 6, 1921, the Fascisti had destroyed, as I have ascertained by following the files of the "Avanti" and the "Corriere della Sera," at least twelve important newspapers, twenty-six *case del popolo*, sixty labor-union headquarters, eighty-six coöperative businesses,

forty-three headquarters of peasant leagues, dozens of employment offices, thirty-four Socialist headquarters, seventeen schools, libraries, and cultural societies, and thirty-six workers' cultural circles.

In the cities, the Fascisti have not only continued this same form of direct action but have also occupied the public buildings and the police-stations, invaded arm stores, ammunition plants, and factories. They have broken strikes and disrupted opposition processions and funerals. In the ports, they have occupied the wharves, the sheds, and even ships. Latterly they have come to intimidate the proprietors of large businesses and have exacted contributions to the movement by armed menace.

The results of these early violent activities (largely centering in Triest, Milan, Bologna, and parts of Tuscany, and almost non-existent in southern Italy and Sicily) may be summarized under the following heads:

1. Non-Italian organizations, papers, schools, and even churches were destroyed.
2. All non-Fascist political and economic organizations were coerced or disrupted.
3. Non-Fascist public meetings were rendered impossible.

4. Anti-Fascist newspapers were forbidden to circulate, or their offices or printing-plants wrecked.
5. Voters were intimidated at elections; and in case the vote for the Socialist, sometimes the Catholic party, exceeded a certain percentage, the whole district was invaded and shot up..
6. Elected officials antipathetic to the Fascisti were murdered or forced to resign.
7. Peasant leagues and labor-unions were disrupted; labor employment offices were destroyed or prevented from functioning.

## CHAPTER V

### EARLY TENDENCIES

THE violence described in the previous chapter gives the clue to certain definite periods in the development of the Fascist movement and to certain tendencies which have since become more outstanding.

The Fasci di Combattimento are the logical outgrowth of the Nationalist locals that sprang into new life in 1914. In that year Mussolini, having been expelled from the Socialist party and deprived of his editorial chair on the "Avanti," attempted to organize Fasci of pro-war Socialists, but was not very successful, for none of these "bands" survived the first year of the war. In that year he also launched the pro-war "Popolo d'Italia"; Enrico Corradini, leader of the Nationalist party, called for war against Austria; Gabriele d'Annunzio scattered his poetic propaganda from Syracuse to Turin. From the sentiments aroused by these three leaders was later to issue Fascism.

The first "bands" in 1919 were composed of *arditi* (shock-troops) largely made up of young Nationalists. These demobilized *arditi* in the annexed areas were irritated by the Government's failure to coerce the new aliens, to Italianize them with the proper expeditiousness. Acting often in concert with the restless and idle soldiery of occupation, the *arditi* committed the misdemeanors and violence previously described.

When the eastern outposts of the Adriatic were in danger of being lost to Italy, many Italian troops and some of these groups, definitely labeled Faschi, rallied behind d'Annunzio and followed him to Fiume and Zara. Mario Carli, in his reminiscent book, "Con d'Annunzio a Fiume," tells vividly of his efforts to organize the *arditi* in support of Fiume and of his arrest at the order of the secretary of war, General Caviglia. On September 11 and 12, 1919, these volunteers streamed south from Triest by bicycle, motor-cycle, by aëroplane, automobile, and motor-boat—infantry, machine-gun companies, grenadiers, Fascisti, even three hundred teachers.

The Fascisti had been organized secretly. Their first public and official appearance occurred in the meeting held by Mussolini in

Milan in March, 1919. Numerous encounters occurred all that year between Fascisti and groups of parading workers. Concurrent with this rise of Fascism came the general strike in protest against the Peace of Versailles, and the elections which so increased the strength of the Socialist party. From then on the mood of labor was ugly. By September, 1920, the "occupation" of the factories and fields was well under way.

The Fascisti, though they hurled themselves upon the Socialists at that time, did not prevent revolution. Rather, the land and factory seizures, by withdrawing attention from Fiume, broke the backbone of the Regency of Carnaro. The factory-seizures, which failed for reasons that have already been enumerated, did, however, alarm the industrialists and the country at large. All forces opposed to revolution were stirred into belated action. An impetus was given to the Fascist movement. The Fascist terrorist activities soon extended to all parts of the country. Toward March bloody conflicts took place in every corner of Italy. Fascist violence soon passed all bounds; the original wave of hate and passion was carried on by its initial propulsion until it finally broke.

in an orgy of blood and incendiaryism the week before the elections of May.

Then Italy breathed again. The Fascisti were beginning to feel a growing antagonism toward the extravagance of their activities. By August 3 the Fascist national directorate was even induced by de Nicola, president of the Chamber of Deputies, to sign a peace-pact with the Socialists, which in the subsequent national Fascist convention was declared by Signor Mandel to be a "truce with the public opinion of America." It was really a truce with the public sentiments of Italy and, had it been maintained, might have turned most of the Fascist energies into political channels. That Mussolini was well aware of the new sentiment of the country is revealed in the tone of his explanation made upon his resignation from the presidency of the Faschi di Combattimento when half the organization—sixty local secretaries representing one hundred and fifty thousand agrarian Fascisti—refused to abide by the pact:<sup>1</sup>

How shall we achieve pacification? Do you think it will be possible to exterminate the 2,000,000 who voted for Socialism. Or to run the risk of civil war?

<sup>1</sup> "Popolo d'Italia," August 8, 1921.

Or to go against the sentiment of the nation? Or do you prefer to submit to a peace imposed by the Socialists as a result of another not improbable whirl of the wheel? The peace-pact of Rome does not mean the demobilization of the Fascisti nor the cessation of their political struggle against the Socialists nor a general embracing of enemies. With the pact of Rome, the Fascisti might have shown not only their pugilistic, bombarding superiority, but their cerebral and moral superiority. . . . After the pact of Rome that party which could give the most firm proof of intellectual discipline would in the reality of things have been victorious. The Fascisti are giving constant proof of their discomfiture.

But on the whole, despite the formation of the militant Arditi del Popolo (July 6) composed of revolutionary Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists, internal war was abating; and Fascism, though it maintained its militancy, also embarked upon a political course. Previously, in the May elections, thirty-five Fascisti, running on various tickets, had been sent to the national chamber. At the Fascist convention of Rome in November, 1921, the National Fascist party was created with a complete economic, political, and social platform. The convention determined that at the next national

election (which has not yet occurred), the new party should run Fascist candidates in every commune and province.

This new political drift was undoubtedly the result of the absorption of the middle class, the *piccola borghesia*, which, though its younger generation provided most of the flying militant squadrons at this time, is traditionally timid, traditionally a law-and-order group. But this group has been so battered and dislocated during the post-war that it has been forced to fight for its existence and its place in the scale of the social hierarchy.

Concurrent with these developments came the rise of agrarian Fascism, perhaps the most important single phase of the movement.<sup>1</sup> Later came into existence labor Fascism on a program of "national syndicalism," the avowed purpose of which was to establish industrial peace and coöperation. These various elements became daily more militant and toward the end of October, 1922, began the March on Rome which after three days culminated in the establishment of Fascism as the supreme governmental party, the creation in Italy of a dictatorship of a minority.

<sup>1</sup> Given detailed treatment in Part II.

These, then, are the principal stages in the Fascist rise to power: Italianization of annexed aliens, participation in the seizure of Fiume, violent reaction to communism, rise of agrarian Fascism, rise of political Fascism, absorption of the middle class, rise of labor Fascism, the March on Rome, dictatorship. The later phases of this series will be considered in detail. But, in the early stages, the possibilities of Fascism were not so easily discernible. The movement was amorphous, continually hauled in contrary directions. Thus, at times, it was used by the big industrialists and the landed proprietors to further their private interests. In Puglia it marked a bloody reaction of property and was identified with an opprobrious system of bossism known as *mazzierismo*. In Sicily and Sardinia it assassinated the peasant leaders who had headed the land-seizure movement. In Triest and Istria it was anti-Slav; in Florence it had a sophomoric character, being largely composed of university students. In Venice, where it had relatively little opposition, it was aristocratic, sedate, and theoretic. In Parma it was accused of being communist, and the delegate from that city, Ruggieri, was hissed when he attempted to speak at the Fascist Rome convention. In the

Adriatic delta district it early developed a program of land-subdivision.<sup>1</sup> In other localities it has been thoroughly middle class.

Yet certain tendencies were clear-cut, though at that time rather negative. • First of all, the movement was anti-Socialist. Yet it has never been, except in certain limited districts and for short periods, a White guard in the service of the reactionaries and profiteers, as the radicals have asserted. As de Stefani, now a member of Mussolini's cabinet, declared in Parliament in July, 1921, "The Fascisti do not intend to be the dagger for the politicians and industrialists with whom for expediency they were yoked during the elections." As a matter of fact many of the principal leaders were recruited from radical ranks. Before the war, Benito Mussolini and Michael Terzaghi and Enrico Besana were revolutionary Socialists; Leonardo Arpinati was an Anarchist; Cesare Rossi was an Anarchist-Syndicalist; and the list might be indefinitely extended. Much of the Fascist anti-Socialist attitude is wrapped up with their hatred of the party's pro-Russian alignment and its compromising enjoyment of governmental privileges. Wrote Piero Belli:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Popolo di Trieste," February 5, 1921.

We have not been born to combat the Socialist party; we are against the past of every party. We march to the conquest of the future against every force that negates the *patria*, that insults it, that would ruin it.

Indeed, the same bitterness was at that early period manifested against the Catholics. In Florence I witnessed the bloody break-up of a Catholic procession that marched to lay a wreath at the foot of the towering statue of Dante in the Piazza Santa Croce. The Fascisti considered this a defilement of the memory of the first great seer of Italian nationalism. Mussolini has spoken of the Popular party in the most rabid manner, as at the national Fascist convention in Rome:

It is the most dangerous. It swings from one extreme to another. It rests upon its rich banking institutions, upon its thirty thousand parochials—black Bolsheviks, more dangerous than red Bolsheviks, and guided by more ferocious neutrals and anti-Italians.

Priests have been murdered in their churches. In Pientina and Vicopisano, the headquarters of the Popular party and the Catholic circle were devastated, and priests ordered to leave their parishes.

Similarly, the Fascisti fought the pacifists and have constantly emphasized the necessity for a large military establishment. Though an amnesty had been granted to all conscientious objectors, they drove the Communist Misiano, who went to Switzerland during the war, out of the Chamber of Deputies, to which he had been legally elected, and out of the country again.

Anti-Socialism, anti-Catholicism, anti-pacifism—these were the burning sparks of Fascism. These earlier tendencies revolved around a theory of nationalism. The Fascisti early evidenced their sympathy with the d'Annunzian expedition and their bitter animosity toward the Treaty of Rapallo, which gave Fiume and Dalmatia to Jugoslavia.

Thus during the initial period of Fascism certain tendencies came well defined. It was, first of all, a post-war projection of the Nationalist movement that had been fighting for Italia Irredenta and against the corruption of the Italian paternal bureaucracy.

Second, Fascism was already an expression of the self-centered raucous adolescence of a nation without governmental traditions in the sense that these are possessed by France or England. It represents a historic phase in the

rise of all new nations eager for unity and glory.

Third, Fascism was against all movements not strictly pro-Italian. It has been against the Socialists not because they are Socialists but because they are internationalists; it has been against the Catholics not on anti-religious grounds but because the papacy has traditionally obstructed the Italian Government.

Fourth, it was already orienting itself toward a program of Mediterranean imperialism.

Fifth, Fascism was in the process of becoming an expression of the traditional Italy, the pushcart Italy, the Italy of the self-sufficient peasant and the small trader. The Fascisti were endeavoring to endow these groups, so long indifferent, so long betrayed by the bureaucracy, with political energy and acumen; they wished to give the *piccola borghesia* a conscience, to weave it into a closely knit social fabric capable of withstanding international anarchy.

On the other hand, Fascism did not and does not really represent the new industrial Italy of Lombardy and Piedmont; it does not represent the proletarian Italy. Nor has it ever, with its egoistic emphasis upon the strong state, represented those nobler international forces that are struggling into life. From the national point of

view, Fascism, despite its destructive tactics and its bigotry, as early as 1920 had become, in many ways, a powerful, invigorating force; from the world point of view, it already appeared reactionary and dangerous.

A preliminary definition is thus possible at this point: *Fascism had become an expression of the post-war restlessness of the demobilized arditi, directed into organized channels by ex-nationalist and ex-syndiculist leaders imbued with the doctrines of direct action and Sorelian violence and inspired by a negative patriotism, for the purpose of nationalizing alitns, destroying Socialism, curtailing the secular influence of the church, uprooting pacifism, and—by making use of the discontented middle-class elements—creating an efficient and strong Italy.*

But the means to be used in creating an efficient and strong Italy had not as yet been clarified. Fascism was still a negative, unintelligent reaction of the trenches against unhealthy economic and political inadequacy. It was lacking in direction, purpose, and common sense, but imbued with all the war restlessness and faith in violence, all the inchoate, misdirected idealism that had been created by interested war propaganda.

**PART II**

**THE AGRARIAN STRUGGLE**



## CHAPTER VI

### AGRARIAN CONDITIONS

LAND! \*That has been the key to Italian prosperity and politics since long before the time of the Gracchi and the *legge frumentaria*. From the time of Sulla down through the long line of contentious emperors, the land question was involved with every program of territorial expansion. Soldiers, flung out against the frontiers, invariably developed a great land-hunger, part of their dream of a settled life. And the confiscation and break-up of the large estates, the improvement of waste and marsh lands, such as those in the Pontine, absorbed the energies of all the most thoughtful rulers. Again, in the later days of the empire, when the monetary and commercial system had broken down, the severance of healthy relations between the city and the country-side strangled civic life and broke the lines of communication within the empire. Italy has always been pre-eminently agrarian: and the problem of to-day,

while complicated by industrialism, by a broader democracy, by socialism, are much the same as when Sulla and Cæsar established their notorious land-laws for the veterans. Demobilized soldiers, the unemployed, shifts of class and population, peasant revolts, absenteeism, soil-exhaustion, primitive methods, and the general state of Europe, cut off from the basis of life, from raw materials, recreate most of the old Roman situation.

Pier Ludovico Occhini in his "La Crisi Agraria" repeatedly insists upon the reality: "the relation between the city and the country is truly the most fear-inspiring question for the future of the nation." "Land, only land," iterated Francesco Crispi, the most imperialistic of all of Italy's ministers. "Only the soil can redeem our country." Garibaldi, who promoted irrigation improvements in connection with the Tiber River, and Cavour, who introduced beet-sugar culture, saw with equal clarity. And today it is more true than ever that Italy's future lies in her soil.

Yet there is no physiographic unity in Italy. All climates, all kinds of soil and land, all altitudes, all degrees of rainfall. Alluvial plain, hill, marsh, and mountain. The important di-

vision, of course, is between North and South Italy. When one crosses the Apuan Alps in either direction he steps into a different country, where even the people preserve unique social customs and speak mutually unintelligible tongues.

The Po valley enjoys the climate and soil of central Europe; its reaches are traversed by myriad streams and grooved with hundreds of canals, some of them dating from 1000 A. D. Except during the months when snow covers the ground, this land is green, the crops are fed by abundant rainfall, the air is clear and salubrious. Well built farm-houses are scattered over the landscape and connected by good roads. The canal system is complemented by adequate steam transportation and an extensive network of interurban electric communications.

Especially is this true of the Adriatic delta district. As one draws near the sea one is reminded of Holland because of the low, fertile, canal-crossed, road-netted panorama. It is a vast alluvial region, extending in a flattened curve from the mouth of the Isonzo, twenty-five miles from Triest, to the Marecchia cutting through Rimini. Numerous sluggish streams, including the Po, meander through this region, bringing down every year great loads of silt from

the Alps and the Apennines, forming wide lagoons, marshes, and mud-flats. This coast constantly encroaches upon the sea. Ancient ports such as Ravenna and Adria now lie from six to fifteen miles inland. The soil is teeming rich, and the whole district is (along with historic Lucca and the environs of Naples) the most fertile developed farming region of the country.

Wrote Antonio Marozzi in the "Giornale d'Italia"<sup>1</sup> in an open letter to the sub-secretary of agriculture, Signor Soleri:

Hon. Soleri, come up here and see. Two or three days will not be badly spent. We will show you our immense plain below the level of the sea, reclaimed by the tenacious will of man, and without, or almost without, governmental assistance; we will show you our hydraulic plants, the network of canals, our farms in which all the most modern technical discoveries are supplied on a large scale. You will have occasion to feel once more proud of being Italian.

Passing to central Italy, the country becomes rolling, even rugged and harsh. The climate along the littoral of the Tyrrhenian Sea varies from that of the Adriatic from Ancona to Chieti, and both from that of the foot-hills and the moun-

<sup>1</sup> February 13, 1922.

tains. In the wider, more level areas, as about Pisa and Lucca, some resemblance exists to the prosperous districts of the north; as one ascends the Arno or Tiber valley the farms take on a rugged appearance—half wild, as Anatole France observes in his "Red Lily." The Campagna about Rome, once densely peopled, is now a vast and dreary waste. One of the most melancholy pictures in the Modern Art Gallery in Rome is that by Vertunni Achilli, depicting a tired woman with her child in her arms threading her way through the marshy and alkaline fields of the Campagna. Only about 10 per cent of this area is cultivated by the plow, and during three fourths of the year the few inhabitants lead a miserable fever-stricken existence.

In the south still other conditions prevail. Sicily and the foot of the peninsula are more like northern Africa, like southern California. The landscape is brown and dry except in the short rainy season; the hills are bare of woods, covered with jagged outgrowth of rock; the soil is often half clay or alkaline, resisting effective tillage. Nor is there the settled security that exists in the north. Both because of the malaria in certain marshy districts and because of the bandits organized into the *mafia*, the peasants can-

not spread over the country-side in isolated dwellings close to their labor but must live on the mountain-tops, huddled together in compact villages. From these they must descend to the plain long before dawn. Often have I heard them singing in the late twilight as they have climbed up the heights after a day's toil. And their labor has been truly labor. Not only the nature of the soil but the scanty rainfall makes returns proportionately slight. They cannot depend upon streams in times of drought as in the north, for the rivers rage for a few hours after each mountain thunder-storm; but most of the year the beds are bleaching sand and boulders.

And everywhere there are special difficulties. Writes Occhini:<sup>1</sup>

Think of the moorlands of central Italy and of the marshes, perennial sources of malaria—of the Mezzogiorno and the islands. Think of the *crete* or clay of Siena; of the *murgie* of Puglia, of the heath that gives an almost desert aspect even to some parts of the Paduan plain. Think of the lack of potable water, an element so important for the lives of men and animals, in central and insular Italy. Think of the Apennine rivers, torrential by nature, which lack water in the very seasons when it is needed. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 42.

In few countries of Europe does there exist such an area irremediably refractory to cultivation, while that which is susceptible can only be utilized at great cost, great perseverance, and after a long series of years.

These various geographic differences impose corresponding land problems and have given rise to the most diverse types of tenure and methods of cultivation. Wrote Stefano Yacini in his "Rapport Final de l'Enquête Agricole":

Agriculturally Italy reveals such a variety of conditions that, far from constituting an economic unity, one can well say the country reflects all that is most diverse in rural economy: from the great estates of the Middle Ages, utilized for an extensive cultivation of the most primitive type to that of very intense cultivation of the most perfected sort; from small heterogeneous cultivation to that of the greatest specialization of products; from the most rudimentary agriculture to that of the most varied rotations; from a return of five lire for every hectare cultivated to that of 2000 lire.

Southern Italy and even the Roman Campagna and other localities are under a régime of absenteeism. Great estates are owned by men who rarely visit their possessions but live in the cities enjoying the usufruct. About Rome the

*latifondi*, or *feudi*, are usually let to *mercanti di Campagna*, or large-scale contractors, who entrust the management of the land to a *fattore*, or bailiff, who resides at the *casale*, as the central farm-house is called.

With regard to Sicily, writes Giuseppe Prezolini in the New York "Nation":<sup>1</sup>

In Sicily large landed property prevails. One-sixth of the islands is owned by 173 people in a population of four million inhabitants; one-third is owned by 787 people. The agricultural class (725,000 people over ten years of age) possess almost nothing. The land-owners, in general, live away from their lands in the Sicilian towns, in Rome, abroad. They rent their lands to people peculiar to Sicily called *Gabelloti* who advance money for the year's crops, frequently rerenting to others who in turn sublet. Thus the peasant has to pay three or four middlemen. The *Gabelloto* is the financier of the agrarian management of the proprietor; he is usually a peasant who has grown rich, a usurer without scruples, who tries to get what profit he can from the land without improving it, not being sure of having it again and running the risk also of losing the harvest by frequent droughts. He employs a personnel of tyrants (rural guards, superintendents, etc.) to keep the peasant under strict guard for fear that he should eat the seed instead of sowing it or rob

<sup>1</sup> March 2, 1921.

the harvest or go to work on other lands. The *Gabel-loto* pays the master and the peasant in advance, but he cannot rob the master and he can rob the peasant; and out of the advance payments which he gives the peasant he takes from 30 to 50 per cent interest. It is not to be wondered that the *Gabelloto* is the most despised and hated person in Sicily.

The parallel between these conditions and the viciousness that featured the Roman provincial administration does not need to be drawn here. I have traveled in Mexico for seventy-five miles through a single hacienda; I have ridden horse-back from dawn till dark and the boundary of one man's property was still invisible beyond the horizon; I have investigated absenteeism in southwestern Spain where the back-wash of a broken empire and the social decay of the race have left a discouraged and poverty-stricken people whose diet means slow starvation; but I have nowhere seen such terrible conditions as prevail in certain parts of southern Italy. One would have to go to the Orient to find equal filth and debasement.

Next to the *piccola borghesia* of the towns, no class in Italy sacrificed more during the war than the peasants of the south. But the idea spread abroad that the war was bringing a new

era, a more liberal régime, that the peasant would be recompensed.' Besides this Santa Claus faith, the peasant of the post-war has a psychology of violence and class-right which he never possessed before. The impossibility of emigrating to the United States has destroyed much of his hope of escape from an intolerable situation by flight. The post-war has seen the rise of peasant leagues, many of them led by the same officers who had participated in the war, others directed by the Popular or Socialist parties. The coöperative Agricole fra Lavoratori della Terra and other coöoperatives and leagues, which had wedged toe-holds in certain districts, broke through all obstacles and soon achieved a sure footing. These leagues enroll virtually the entire peasant population.

Unrest increased. In 1919 the peasants seized the necessary lands. Bands of peasants moved en masse out from the villages and camped on lands previously marked out. Socialists went with their red flags; Catholics, often led by priests, went with their white banners; ex-soldiers went with the tricolor or with black flags. The first went to establish coöperative colonies; the two latter groups to establish peasant proprietors. This movement spread through all of

Sicily and lasted about four months. In 1920, during the revolutionary drive of September, land-seizures again occurred, this time even in provinces as far north as Turin. More than one third of the entire area of Sicily was thus seized.

The land-seizures were not directed so much against the proprietors as against the *gabelloti*, whose tyranny had become unsupportable. The demands of the Sicilian peasants are well summarized by the four points adopted by the provincial convention held in Salemi, Trapani, on August 8, 1920:

1. Abolition of the intermediary land-speculators (*gabelloti*).
2. Cession of lands to the agrarian coöoperatives.
3. Abolition of the system of fixed rentals.  
[The climate makes crop-returns too uncertain.]
4. Determination of the terms of rental by means of a commission representative of renters and proprietors.

The seizures of the land were temporarily legalized by the Chamber—the opinion of the people in the south was so militantly unanimous, and the conditions abolished so obviously mediæval. A decree, published September 2, 1919, had already been called forth by the first signs

of peasant unrest. On December 18, the Chamber passed an agrarian law introduced by Signor Reina, which was promptly put into effect by the Falconi and Visocchi decrees. These decrees aimed at increasing the yield of cereals and at providing the peasantry with lands. The prefects were authorized to occupy (as a temporary measure) all the uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands in behalf of legally organized associations. There were thus requisitioned 27,253 hectares, of which over 18,000 were in the province of Rome and nearly 8000 in the province of Caltanissetta, Sicily. This law was amended in April, 1920, and the study of the applications for land-grants was therein referred to a special provincial commission to be presided over by the local tax assessor and composed of two land-owners and two peasants. Penalties were established for the illegal invasion of lands. After the seizures of 1920 a central Commission of Agriculture was set up to decide appeals regarding the award of lands to the peasants, and also a regional autonomous commission in Palermo for all of Sicily.

The original Visocchi Decree was successively modified by the various ministers of agriculture — Micheli, Mauri, Bertini, all belonging to the

Popular party—in an attempt to adjust it to the realities of the situation and clarify the phrase *mal coltivate*, which had caused much litigation by its diverse interpretations.

These decrees, 'in their improved and final form, were presented as a resolution to the Chamber of Deputies in 1922 and adopted. This law, had not the Fascist *coup* intervened, and had it been ratified by the Senate and signed by the king, would have made possible a general utilization of the idle or poorly cultivated lands without disturbing existing land-titles. This law not only provided for additional commissions for determining rentals and settling disputes, but also for the Istituto Nazionale per la Colonizzazione Interna, with funds of two hundred million lire to be devoted to the promotion of agrarian efficiency and the opening up of farms. This law would have made accessible to the peasants, or other equipped agents, all land-holdings (*latifondi*) greater than five hundred acres, or, when less than five kilometers from a commune, greater than two hundred and fifty acres. The institute was to have the right either of expropriation or temporary control and could have also imposed agricultural improvements or required the use of scientific methods on all "un-

cultivated or sporadically cultivated lands or those susceptible to noteworthy increase in cultivated products."

But far more significant with respect to the rise of Fascism are the developments in the Adriatic delta district. All the important incidents in the land-war, during its initial phase, had their origin in this small sector. And this, to the Italian, has pleasing significance. The people of Romagna, as the name would suggest, are considered the real Romans. To this region fled the most hardy Latin remnants during the time of barbarian persecutions. And these Romagnoli, big of body, big eaters, big talkers, and politically minded—Mussolini being one of them—have been the most active in all the recent troubles.

For decades, the Adriatic delta district—with the exception of the large estates near Venice and in parts of Ferrara—has been largely populated by a prosperous class of small landholders and unionized tenant farmers, well versed in scientific intensive cultivation. Both the large owners and the tenants have shown their initiative and intelligence by grouping themselves into powerful coöperative banks and purchasing-agencies for the more effective use of modern

machinery and technical methods. And yet, even in parts of this region, absenteeism is not unwonted. In Ferrara the land is "concentrated in the hands of a few hundred persons; of whom but a score or so interest themselves directly in their own properties."<sup>1</sup>

Five or six decades ago much of this region was swampy, malarial, and farmed in a slovenly, ignorant fashion by the old feudal patriarchal colonies. In Ferrara the colony unit was known as the *versuro* of twenty-six hectares, and the patriarchal labor contract as the *boaria*. The mid-century wars for unification and, later, the introduction of machinery, dislocated these cognatic units. In some cases agriculture so declined that only waste lands remained.

The Government promoted reclamation by building roads, drainage systems, etc. This process still continues, lending a peculiar character to the agrarian labor problem. As Professor Gustavo del Vecchio writes:

This region is subject to progressive transformation. During the period of swamp desolation occurred the great cultivation of alfalfa and rice. Later came the cultivation of grain and fruit-trees. Simultaneously were constructed the first roads worthy of the name,

<sup>1</sup> Italo E. Tonsiello, "Il Tramonto delle Barone Rosse," p.<sup>a</sup> 148.

along with houses and stables. Population became dense, and stock multiplied faster even than was warranted by the fertility accumulated in the soil during its long period of intermittent cultivation and "extensive" farming. Thereupon large-scale methods, with machinery, were instituted by technical experts, who rotated crops and secured maximum returns. The workers needed for this form of labor could not be composed, as in other localities, of a resident farming population in constant equilibrium. On the contrary, they comprise a mass distinctly proletarian, drawn from the . . . excess population in the frontier zones, where occurs an extraordinary demand for labor devoted to the initial important work of transforming the marshes into tillable land. This agrarian population presents all the characteristics of an industrial proletariat . . . a mass called to the . . . "manufacture" of land.

Before and during the war, when the labor-supply rarely came up to the demand, the Socialists had not succeeded in controlling the bulk of the peasants except in certain sections such as Ferrara, but after the war they managed to weld the small farmers and this proletariat (excluding the Catholics) into one powerful class organization, which they manipulated largely for political ends. The war strengthened this essentially illogical alliance. Several décreés were

taken advantage of by the proprietors to pocket the profits resulting from increased production stimulated by war-time needs. Thereupon many of the renters and colonists turned definitely to the land leagues for protection.

With these powerful peasant leagues were also united the coöperative colonies, which have rented large tracts, nearly a hundred thousand acres in all, and farmed them collectively, with, on the average, 150 men to a colony. The structure of these coöperative colonies is analyzed in the next chapter. They had long superseded the patriarchal system of the *boaria* in Ferrara and elsewhere and had reduced all peasants to the status of a farm proletariat. The traditional peasant conservatism was thus destroyed and the possibilities for radical propaganda enlarged. The farm-worker now had no love for the land he tilled; and love for the soil is essential. Before the war, abuse of the soil was partially prevented on these colonies by the presence of technical advisers appointed by the proprietors, less frequently by the colonists themselves. So long as production increased and these technicians could be imposed to prevent soil-examination, the proprietors looked upon these colonies with moderate favor.

But during the revolutionary activities of 1920 the leagues were emboldened to make greater and more arbitrary demands upon the proprietors, in some cases resorting to violence and destruction of crops and buildings. The leagues demanded, among other things, the eight-hour day, the right of monopoly control of the supplying of all labor by means of the class-controlled *ufficio di collocamento*, or league employment office; they also demanded that the proprietors, in proportion to the size of their holdings, provide employment to workers during the slack season—in Ferrara three workers (*operai*) to the *versuro*. In addition, the employers lost the right, in most cases, to impose technical overseers. At the same time the peasant boycott was directed against all renters in an attempt to destroy the *mezzadria* or crop-sharing system.

In the province of Mantua, the peasant league was more conservative, having developed, with steady progress, through a thirty-year period. Alongside of five hundred *leghe di mestiere*, scattered through seventy-eight communes, were, in 1919, 250 other coöperatives of various types, flanked by a rural bank, L'Istituto di Credito Popolare Mantovano. The peasant organization early gained a share of control in the *uf-*

*fici di collocamento.* In the administration of these came to be represented the provincial federation of farm workers and the agrarian association of the proprietors; their function was widened so that they not only supplied labor but regulated the labor turnover so as to insure an equal number of working days throughout the year and guaranteed employment to a given number of hands on a given area. In 1920 the peasant federation, without a single day of strike, succeeded in securing a minimum of 220 days' work a year for six men on drained lands and five men on marsh lands for every thirty-three hectares. In addition to the league, there existed in every commune a land coöperative, and about ten thousand acres were rented and farmed collectively and rather successfully, with a constantly increasing output, as was demonstrated by the coöperatives of Suzzara, Sermide, Gabbianna, and other localities. These produced the greatest amount of grain per acre of any cultivated land in the province. The peasants were prosperous, contented, and sober. And although unemployment is endemic in the region, the coöperatives helped to absorb most of the floating workers.

These developments were also the result, as

has been indicated, of peasant proletarianization,—the rise of a disinherited class of farm-workers, perfectly organized into Socialist land leagues and closely affiliated with the *sindacati* of the cities. Thus at the time of the factory seizures in September, 1920, the cities, in many instances, were rationed by the joint regulations of the leagues and the chambers of labor. And though in some cases sharp differences began to appear between the two bodies, in general the plight of the middle classes became quite uncomfortable. There was everywhere a marked antagonism between the small bourgeoisie of the cities, whose standards had already been terribly lowered by war, and the peasantry. The city-dwellers were, in various localities, boycotted by the organized peasants—a singular repetition in an established state of Bolshevik experience, and a tendency which has since been observable even in the United States.

With the exception of the Polesine and some other small sectors, the leagues in imposing these conditions resorted to considerable violence. Throughout this region crops and villas were burned. In 1920–21 serious fires destroyed the property of many who refused to treat with the leagues, mostly in Ferrara. Among such were

the crops of Engineer Marchioria Fossadalber with 120,000 lire loss; that in Berna of the stables of Engineer Angelini, loss, 100,000 lire; that at Copparo on the property of Giuseppe Brancaleoni, 120,000 lire; the warehouse of Umberto Caneato in Ro Ferrarese, 1,800,000 lire; the hemp in Bendino of Signor Angelino Attilo, 900,000 lire; at Migliaro, the possessions of Quarra, Rottacio, and Tedeschi, 250,000 lire. In 1920 occurred 102 farm strikes involving 880,000 workers with a loss of 9,921,96 working days. Mario Missiroli, editor of "Il Secolo" in Milan, declared the loss in crops, business, and interest on withdrawn bank-accounts during the trouble in 1920 amounted to at least half a billion lire. In Ferrara production dropped from 900,000 quintals in 1919 to 300,000 in 1920. The measure of control arrived at by the leagues toward the close of 1920 was absolute. The boycott in certain localities was inexorable. A man who refused to join the league had to emigrate. He could not find a place to sleep, nor could he buy food, have his hair cut, or his shoes soled. He was in constant danger of assassination. This violence was directed particularly against the crop-sharing system; workers on shares were scornfully called *carabinieri della proprietà*—

property guards. And, as unemployment increased, the leagues even limited the use of machinery in order to provide labor for a larger number of hands!

The minutes of some of the leagues, which I have examined, are instructive; they read like the mandates of a medieval ecclesiastical authority:

The Assembly approves that Lunghi Federico remains boycotted until he leaves his father [also boycotted]. . . . The Assembly accepts Amadeo Falarni as member because he has paid the league 100 lire for its headquarters fund and fifty lire for his wife. . . . The Assembly orders Federico Pedroli to come every evening for one month to the League Headquarters to give an account of himself.

Several boycott cases were tried in the Bologna courts. In the early part of 1921, six league officials were tried and condemned to twenty months' imprisonment for having imposed a fine upon Ezio Roma, a renter on shares, because he used his wife and children to help him clear the land of stones instead of employing outside help. Reads the court record: "The league members in a meeting presided over by Antonio Pantaleoni, *capo-lega* and president of the direction of the

league, decided to impose upon Ezio Roma a fine of two thousand lire to be paid within a few days under penalty of the boycott." Roma went to the authorities; thereupon the league doubled the fine, so that he had to pay in all four thousand lire.

On March 20, 1921, Silvio Pocaterra of San Martino was sentenced to one year, eleven months, and ten days of imprisonment and to pay a fine of five hundred lire for having in August, 1920, as head of the league in that town, imposed a fine of one thousand lire upon Antonio Cavigchi for employing a non-league worker.

According to Mario Missiroli the peasant organization had "not only failed to solve the tremendous problem of balance between the population and the labor market" but had in the past "helped to create a vast agrarian middle class with nothing in common with the rest of the farm population, with the farm-hands, or with the Socialism that gave it birth." The agrarian struggle of 1920 was "conducted by the Socialists of Bologna with an unheard-of discipline and violence in the hope of preventing the Socialist army from breaking in two; to prevent the peasants from going their own way and isolating the rest of the mass." The violence

with which the land-war in Bologna was carried on "sprang from fierce determination, from the instinct of self-preservation." Rather than for the "conquest of better agrarian contracts, it appears the organization was battling for life, battling to survive . . ."

Time and conditions were subtly working against the Socialist and Catholic domination. The war-refugees, driven south along the littoral after Caporetto, had increased the number of permanent residents; demobilization added to the dislocation and unemployment; the economic crisis of the post-war flooded the districts with laborers from the industrial centers.

The policy of the leagues was to accept every new-comer without reference to soil productivity. And, having assumed the responsibility for the distribution of labor, the leagues had also to guarantee employment. This proved particularly disastrous for the coöperative colonies, on which was inaugurated a steady increase in the number of hands and a corresponding reduction in hours and wages. The customary yearly wage-surpluses of these societies were wiped out, and efficiency went by the boards.

## CHAPTER VII

### RISE OF THE COÖPERATIVE MOVEMENT

A N understanding of agrarian Fascism is impossible without reference to the development of the coöperative movement. The Italian coöperatives have been among the most happy expressions of voluntary association in the world. They are much more extensive and thoroughly organized than the old Russian self-governing *artels* or the *fruitières* of the Basque mountains; they are more democratic than the *positos* or grain banks of Portugal and Spain; and they are of more social significance than the Rochdale stores in England. Coöperatives are an integral part of every labor and peasant organization, Socialist, Catholic, or Fascist. The first thing a new *sindacato* thinks of doing is to establish a coöperative purchasing and selling society.

The father of the Italian coöperative movement is Luigi Luzzatti, who served as prime minister in 1910. He interested himself first in coöperatives of credit and adapted the Schulze-Deletzscht type to Italian needs. In 1865 were

founded the people's coöperative banks (*banche popolari*) of Milan, Cremona, and Bologna. By 1876 Luzzatti had organized the first association of such banks. To-day there are over eight hundred, principally in Lombardy and the Emilia. Their deposits consist, in the main part, of savings-accounts and amounted on June 30, 1914 to 703,498,475 lire and on June 30, 1919—the latest available figures—to 1,423,739,540 lire.

The first rural bank (*cassa rurale*) was founded in Loreggia in the province of Padua in 1883 by Leone Wollemborg; and rural coöperative banking was soon supported by other propagandists of the rising social-Catholic movement. These banks are constituted on the *Raffeisen* type. The Catholic institutions accept deposits and provide loans to members only. The Socialist banks conduct a wider business. By the end of 1916 there were 2725 rural coöperative banks, one third of which were Catholic. The deposits of all combined amounted on June 30, 1919, to 281,991,528 lire.

The coöperative credit system of Italy is correlated and integrated by the *Istituto di Credito per le Cooperative*, founded by Luzzatti in 1918. Part of the capital of this institution is supplied

by the state, which has representatives on the executive board. The bulk of the funds are derived from the non-profit savings-banks, the people's banks, and the two workers' central coöperative insurance societies. Loans are granted upon certificates issued by the various governmental departments on the basis of contracts made with local coöperatives, and credit is also advanced to consumers' stores and to farming and building societies. Occasional loans are made to private companies, but these, as opposed to those made to coöperatives, are subject to governmental taxation.

The coöperative labor and farm associations date back almost as many years as the people's banks. The old contract system by which the Government promoted reclamation work proved onerous to labor. But, instead of striking or agitating, a group of workers (virtually without capital) organized in 1883 the Cooperativa di Lavora di Ravenna, in order to contract directly for public works. Then, as the need for public improvements diminished, this and later coöperatives turned to the land. There are, however, more than three hundred labor coöperatives still in existence. Among the most important are

the building societies, and these since the war have made the only real efforts to meet the housing crisis, and in Milan constructed nearly 80 per cent of all new buildings. One of the largest undertakings during the war was the building of a municipal hospital at Genoa at a cost of half a million lire by the Federation of Ligurian Societies, representing sixteen trades. All of these coöperatives are subsidized by the Government, and their contracts run into millions of dollars annually.

The first coöperative association of land renters was founded in 1886. Three years later, the peasant farmers followed suit, and the agricultural coöperative movement soon gathered rapid headway. At the close of the war there were about seven thousand agricultural coöperatives and mutual insurance societies in north and central Italy.

Two types of land colonies have been built up by these coöperatives: (1) *Affittanze a conduzione diversa* is followed by the small tenant Catholic farmers. Land is rented or purchased outright and then parceled out to the members, who labor and usually dispose of their products individually. (2) *Affittanze a conduzione collettiva* means that the land is farmed collectively

under the direction of skilled technical advisers,<sup>1</sup> members, and hired labor working equal hours for equal pay. The products are later disposed of by the coöperatives and any profits not allocated to the sinking-fund are then divided by the members.

The efficiency of such entities, given favorable conditions, has largely been due to the enthusiastic group-spirit aroused in men working co-operatively for self-betterment and to the unusual measures of self-discipline. Members who "insist upon instigating altercation or discord in the society by seditious words" are expelled and their share of the stock forfeited. If the membership falls below a given number—usually twenty—the society is automatically dissolved, whereupon the funds go to the survivors. *In causa di divergenze irreconciliabile* the whole of the capital goes to the commune. The fine and the boycott supplement the disciplinary measures. The principal criticism of the first form of rental is that the members are often dissatisfied with their respective allotments; this dif-

<sup>1</sup> "All the members of the association for collective rental are obliged to accept the technical director named by the landlord, and obey the orders and instructions that he may reasonably see fit to give."—From a contract between the Federation for Collective Rental and Pious Works and the proprietors, September 22, 1919, province of Bergamo.

ficulty is often obviated by distributing the land plots by lot. The main criticism of the second form is that it tends to create a farm proletariat lacking sympathetic attachment to the land tilled. The technical adviser, so long as he was a part of the system, prevented improper exhaustion of the soil.

The purchasing coöperatives (*consorzi agrari*) represent a distinct and later development. These buy, occasionally manufacture, chemicals, fertilizers, farm implements, and other supplies to sell to the farm members at cost. Some are peasant coöperatives; some are controlled by the large landowners. In all, they number over fifteen hundred. Important organizations are found in Parma, Cremona, Novara, Siena, Ravenna, and Ancona. The strongest group is known as the Federazione dei Consorzi Agrari, located in Piacenza with branches in Rome and elsewhere. The federation owns ships for importing goods from abroad, and its sales total more than a million lire annually.

Coöperative enterprise also took hold of the marine workers, who, at the close of the war, organized the famous Garibaldian Coöperative, at the head of which is the well known Giuseppe Giulietti, president of the Seamen's Federation,

who provisioned d'Annunzio in Fiume in defiance of the Italian Government. This coöperative bought and operated its own vessels, and also leased (from the Nitti Government) five ocean liners, in which were invested some six and a quarter million lire for operating capital, and which were thoroughly overhauled at a cost of some eight million lire. The running of these ships has taught the marine workers some of the difficulties of industrial management and has given them first-hand knowledge of operating costs, thereby increasing their ability to bargain rationally with private companies in matters of wages and conditions. The ocean liners were later reclaimed by the Government at great loss to the organization, and the coöperative practically disrupted by the Fascisti.

Two blows have been dealt the general coöperative movement: first, by Fascist destruction, and, second, by the withdrawal, without proper interval of warning, of governmental subsidies. The destructive sorties of the Fascisti nearly always included, as points of attack, the popular coöperatives. Thus at Ostiglia in Lombardy, after several invasions of the town, the Fascisti sent the following message to the Cooperative di Consuma ed Agricola, which was

managing the most important café of the place:

The management of the coöperative is invited to liquidate the property, to sell all of its furnishings, before the end of May. This may be done without fear of molestation.

The time was extended by the Fascisti to June 30, 1921, by which date the coöperative had obeyed the order.

At Suzzara the Fascisti came in *camions* from Modena, Reggia, Poggia, and other places, and shot up the town. They were fired at from the metal-works and thereupon invaded the Coopérativa di Consumo, one of the most flourishing in Italy. Furniture, books, pictures, decorations were burned. Employees were caned. Arrigo Lupi, director of the auxiliary branch of the coöperative bank, was driven away and asserted later that 200,000 lire in bills of exchange were carried off. (Threatened with death by the Fascisti, he later retracted this charge.) The store was looted of goods, cloth, food-stuffs, etc., which were subsequently found in the homes of three Fascisti.

Similarly were destroyed the Cooperativa di Consumo of Pergognana, the damage amounting to 150,000 lire; of Soave di Porto-Manto-

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vano, 100,000 lire. In Tuscany, the destruction of the coöperative of Rifredi resulted in a loss of 300,000 lire; of Prato, 850,000 lire; of Vaiano, 200,000 lire. It would be tedious to give an account of the destruction of the coöperatives of Bagnola, Vidalenzi, Vernio, Tabaiano, Novellaro, Goito, Rivalata, Legnano, Foiano Cesole, Carlossa, Carmignano, and of dozens of other towns throughout Italy.

In November, 1922, I visited an enormous coöperative macaroni factory in Rome up near the Aqua Paola, which had been devastated. Nothing remained but the blackened walls; machinery, fixtures, windows, doors, everything had been ripped out. I reflected at that time, as I leaned upon the balustrade above, with the waters of the superb fountain echoing in my ears, and looked down upon the vast panorama of the eternal city, what all this destruction meant to the Italian worker and how this undertaking had been built up by labor and sacrifice. Macaroni is the staff of life to an Italian, and this business had represented an accumulation of social enterprise, knowledge, and voluntary association toward which the state and the public at large had contributed—wiped out in one night's orgy of incendiarism and vandalism.

In this general devastation the Catholic co-operatives were less seriously damaged; the Socialist co-operatives were largely swept out of existence, and the movement is so badly crippled that it is doubtful whether it will revive for years to come, if at all. The head of the Catholic movement made a statement that while their damages have been formidable he feels that there is possibility of continuing their work.

The Fascisti, for all their insistence upon a *laissez-faire* commercial policy, their insistence that all business should be conducted by private capital, have been obliged, in order to win peasant and labor support, to establish their own co-operative societies. The only difference between these societies and those headed by the Catholics and Socialists lies in the fact (and this now holds for all co-operative business) that they are not subsidized by the Government.

The growth of the Fascist co-operative movement has been rapid and enthusiastic and probably replaces the strength of the destroyed Socialist co-operatives. Indeed, many of the Fascist co-operatives were formerly connected with the Socialist party. Their affiliation with the Sindacato Italiano delle Cooperative, or Fascist national co-operative association, was brought

about by coercion and propaganda. A great many coöperatives, menaced with destruction, hurriedly withdrew from the Socialist national association and joined that of the Fascisti. In other cases coercion was more flagrant. Thus the coöperatives of Sermide, Goito, Marmirolo, San Benedetto, and dozens of other towns, after petty invasions, were forced to agree to the following conditions:

1. Indorsement of the Fascist program.
2. The coöperative to assume the name determined upon by the local head of the Fascist organization.
3. The nomination of an executive committee acceptable to the Fascio.

In Portomaggiore, the Fascisti visited each of the members of the executive committee of the Cooperative di Produzione e Lavoro. These were ordered "for their own good" to come "voluntarily" to a meeting in the Fascist headquarters for the purpose of founding a "Consorzio delle Coöoperative del Sindacato Economico del Fascio." Some attended. Four Fascisti were sent to the secretary of the old coöperative ordering the surrender of the books and the minutes. The old coöperative was then changed in name, and the founder and manager, Antonia

Bottizzi, discharged. At Cittavecchia, the Fascisti, after storming the town and forcing the resignation of the municipal authorities, demanded that the local coöperative affiliate itself with the Fascio. These instances could be indefinitely multiplied by any one patient enough to go over the files of the press for the last two years. The "Avanti" of Milan, the "Paese" (since suppressed) of Rome, the "Epoca" of Rome, "Il Secolo" of Milan, and the various papers of the Popular party, "Nuovo Trentino" of Trent, "Libertà" of Padua, etc., have given especially ample and convincing records of the methods of the Fascist coöperative movement. The same evidence may be obtained from the Fascist papers, with less circumstantial detail, papers such as "Il Popolo d'Italia," "L'Assalto" of Bologna, or the "Cremona Nuova." The items in these last are apt to read somewhat after this fashion:

A COÖPERATIVE OF VALMACCA  
(Monferrato)

150 proletarian workers with coöperative and headquarters repudiate the catastrophic subversive ideas and pass from their *sindacato*, sending Mussolini and

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Rossoni (secretary of the Fascist Federation of Corporations) strong *alalà*.<sup>1</sup>

The rise of the Fascist coöperative movement is proof of the vitality of the coöperative principle and the integral importance of coöperation in the wilderness of Italian social life. The change has been merely the splitting of the movement into three national organizations instead of two, these three corresponding to the three political alinements: Catholic, Socialist, and Fascist. The sad part of the whole situation has been that the coöperative movement should be subordinated to any political faction. Now that the Fascisti are in control, the Fascist coöoperatives will inevitably be given precedence. The Fascisti coöperative movement will be placed in dangerous superiority, and when the new party loses control the result will be all the more disastrous for the coöperatives. The only rational solution is coöperation for coöperation's sake. The people would be benefited by a truly disinterested, non-political, non-governmental régime.

<sup>1</sup> "Popolo d'Italia," September 1, 1922.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RISE OF THE POPULAR PARTY

THE Popular party is one of the three important political movements that crystallized from the general unrest and from the prevailing antagonism to the Peace of Versailles. The Popular party is distinctly a movement of *contadini*.<sup>1</sup> The allied Catholic Federation of Workers numbers more than a million members (1921), and most of these are peasants. The party has, therefore, wielded decided influence upon the events occurring in the Po valley and the Adriatic delta district, where from 1919 to 1921 it shared political and economic control with the Socialist party.

After unification and the overthrow of the Papal Government of the city of Rome in 1870, the Catholics sullenly held aloof from the new Government and, in conformity with the Non Expedit of the Holy See, refused to participate in the civil elections or to hold civil office. The liberal bourgeoisie, it was hoped, would be ob-

liged to fall back upon the Catholics for the necessary organized support for the defense of property and order. But though at first republican and, later, proletarian unrest menaced the new state, and though at times (as after the failure of Crispi's attempt to invade Abyssinia) the radical elements pressed the conservatives hard for control, this electoral abstention, in the main, gave the anti-Catholic, liberal, democratic, and masonic elements free reign in guiding the national policies.

Seeing the futility of such an intransigent course and that the church could not indefinitely ignore political and social questions, Pope Leo XIII in his famous encyclical, the *Rerum Novarum*, launched a program of enlightened reform, and, during the last ten years of the nineteenth century, attempted to create a Catholic movement of the Left similar to those which had arisen in France, Belgium, and Austria. The pope boldly adopted the watchword, "Social justice": "Wages should not be less than are necessary to maintain a frugal and sober worker"—an idea which let down the flood-gates of endless controversy.

The Christian-Democratic group that resulted had two aims: to wean the peasants from Social-

ist doctrines and to organize the Catholics for the day when the Savoyard monarchy should fall. The new group opposed the futility of the class-struggle, maintaining that a thoroughgoing elimination of the corruption of the liberal state would reestablish a Christian spirit in society. Harmony between capital and labor was to be the working formula for industry. Such was the program of Milan of 1894. The movement grew. The first decade of the twentieth century saw—under the leadership of Toniolo—a great expansion of the Social-Catholic movement. Under the patronage of the church itself, this aroused great consternation and led to a fear, which has never been dissipated, of an alliance between the Socialists and Catholics.

The Government, however, did not hesitate to lay a heavy hand upon radical Catholics, who, along with the Socialists, on the occasion of the riots of May, 1898, were arrested, tried, and convicted. Filippo Turati, editor of "La Critica Sociale," and Davide Abertario, editor of "Osservatore Cattolico," were led handcuffed in the same file of prisoners through the streets of Milan.

Two of the most turbulent years of Italy's post-unification history followed. Govern-

mental coercion was combated in every quarter. The work of the Chamber of Deputies was paralyzed for two years, much as during the recent period. King Humbert was assassinated in 1900; Genoa was uprooted by a general strike in the same year.

But these radical occurrences frightened many Catholics. The conservative Liberals and the conservative Catholics drew together. The Socialist menace, instead of bringing the bourgeoisie to the feet of the Clericals, had split the latter, bringing the conservatives among them to beg assistance of the Savoyard Liberals. This desertion caused the radical Catholics, headed by Romolo Murri, to throw in their lot with the proletariat, especially the rural proletariat. At the same time, the left-wingers championed the right of the laity to engage in political affairs. Their view, supported by Cardinals Rampolla and Svampa, triumphed at the Christian-Democratic convention of Bologna in 1908.

But in the same year Pope Leo XIII was succeeded by Pius X, whose election was considered the triumph of the Triple Alliance in international politics and of Giolitti in internal affairs. Pius attempted to put the brakes upon radicalism. Through his efforts, the conserva-

tive Catholics triumphed all along the line. In 1904, just before the general strike of that year, they were allowed to participate in the elections. But the Catholic organizations in which the Christian-Social elements predominated were dissolved. Christian Democracy during the next two years was condemned, scourged, and suffocated by the high officials of the church.

Not until the campaign of 1913 was the Non Expedit finally abolished by the Gentiloni pact. Ever larger numbers of Catholics appeared on the tickets of the various parties. Italy was drifting toward a conservative parliamentary majority composed of Clericals and Liberals, with the proportionate number of the former constantly increasing.

The war and post-war not only precipitated revolutionary crises but spurred the fallen Social-Catholic movement to its feet again. In January, 1919, the Popular party (P. P. I.) was organized—a party deeply impregnated with the so-called subversive doctrines of the moment. The ground for this organization had been broken by Don Luigi Sturzo in his series of aggressive articles appearing in the "Corriere d'Italia," the leading Catholic daily of Rome, during November and December, 1918.



Convention of the Popular party in Rome



Don Struzo's activities soon won for him the name of "the modern Savonarola." He is a Sicilian priest, short, dark, gravely animated, with a habit of pacing to and fro, one hand clenched tensely behind his back. He has the face of a dreamer, the eyes of a visionary, with refined, rather aristocratic features, and, except for the decisive chin and a certain firmness of physiognomy, would scarcely be taken for a man of action and the founder of a party.

The platform of the P. P. I. promulgated by the provisional organization committee revealed a desire to create an enlightened conciliatory policy which would absorb all those to whom revolutionary socialism was distasteful yet who were desirous of a betterment of social conditions and disgusted with the old, corrupt Liberal party and the Democratic groups which had been so effectively manipulated by Giolitti. This provisional program emphasized the integrity of the family and freedom of the schools, and called for war on illiteracy and for the extension of popular education and culture. It demanded that the Catholic workmen's organizations be represented with the Socialists on the various public labor committees, local, provincial, and national, and that adequate social legis-

lation and international agreements guaranteeing the rights of labor with reference to hours and conditions of work, etc., be effected. It noted the necessity of developing coöperative undertakings, and it advocated the creation of a stabilized class of peasant proprietors. Other demands were: thorough organization of the productive capacities of the nation and the scientific development of agriculture and irrigation; political decentralization; political autonomy for all public entities, communes, etc., and a restimulating of regional life. Taxation and the electoral system were to be reformed, the latter by proportional representation and woman suffrage. The Senate, to which appointments are now made by the king on the recommendation of the minister in power, was to be transformed into an electoral body to be composed of representatives from various organized groups—educational, political, and economic—a sort of technical soviet. The international program adhered to the Wilsonian Fourteen Points.

The new party also gave greater impetus to the Catholic Labor groups. In 1914, at the outbreak of the war, these elements numbered in all 108,826; in 1916, 92,998; while in 1922 the num-

ber had risen to 1,180,000, of which 935,000 (80 per cent were farm workers. The new party polled in its first elections (1919) a vote second only to that of the Socialists, securing one hundred seats in the National Chamber, which number was increased to 108 in the elections of May, 1921.

The organization is quite free from the influence of the confessional, and, though a part of Catholic inspiration, its program was, from the beginning, broad enough to appeal to non-Catholics. The difficulty of such an alinement was cleverly pointed out by G. A. Colonna di Cesaro in a 1921 number of "*La Vita Italiana*":

The P. P. I. has never had a precise orientation. Beneath the cloak of spiritual idealism, it has gathered together the most disparate elements; not only has it absorbed the most hidebound conservatives but on the other hand—to attract the mass—it has constituted itself the paladin of the small farmer and the peasant. Its hostile anti-governental manifestations have frequently coincided with those of the extreme Socialists, but its demands are not concrete, and it is not inspired with an organic, unified, or coherent program. The Popular party has wished to negate all connection with the clerical group from which it was derived, and is

thus not only shorn of tradition but its program results from contingent situations, even from actual electoral considerations.

However, the troubled post-war period with its intensification of class-struggle necessitated the formulation of more concrete aims. While, on the one hand, Conservative Catholics were hopeful that the P. P. I. would diminish radicalism, in Bergamo the party leaders formed revolutionary councils; and Miglioli, the most influential, even went so far as to set the date for the social revolution. Don Sturzo summarized the new dilemma of the party in the "*Corriere d'Italia*" (April 11, 1920) when he stated:

For us the central fact of the actual revolutionary phase is the problem of labor, its organization, its changing relations with capital, brought about by the increasing value of its products and by the growth in its syndicalist and political strength. The Italian political parties mature with reference to this central issue, and any party that develops on the margin from other factors must lack popular appeal and real vitality, hence would be destined to lose the characteristics of a party and become a simple association of limited scope with an ineffective representation in Parliament.

These differences cropped out in the various national conventions, the first of which was held in Bologna in 1919, a few months after the founding of the organization and at a time of growing social unrest. Don Sturzo on that occasion declared that the slogan of the new party should be the old formula: "Popolo Eletto, Plebe Santa, Popolo Cristiano." He insisted that the party should remain free from church connections: "Catholicism is religion. It is universal. A party is political and signifies division. Our party should be animated by a spirit of Christianity."

But though Don Sturzo dominated the organization, the radical elements forced through the following significant resolution:

Considering it as undeniable that the right to labor is a corollary of the right of existence and that for the effective realization of the right to labor the necessary means of production must be provided by legal means; considering that this principle implies a transformation of the existing machinery of production, a transformation made less remote by the phenomena springing from the war, the Popular party proposes to fight for the legal and necessary steps for changing and gradually bridging the present liberal capitalist wage economy to an economy more humane and Christian, in which cap-

ital—considered as a product of labor—be redirected to its natural function as a mere material agent of production compensated within well defined limits, in order that labor, on the other hand, be it intellectual or manual, shall be assured the fullest fruits of its productive efforts.

While most of the energies of the party were directed toward attracting the votes of the peasantry, the Italian Federation of Workers has been, during most of the post-war, the largest national labor federation. The federation has been careful to distinguish its tactic from that of the Socialist General Federation of Labor. At the time of the two days' strike in 1919 against the Peace of Versailles, the Catholic federation limited its manifestations to a single day and expressly stated that its support of the strike was a "manifestation in favor of a just and Christian peace," and that it was "against every violence, every Bolshevik degeneration." The Catholic railway unions, in fact, refused to participate in any strike for political ends. The constant orientation in the Catholic Labor group has been, therefore, against violence and in favor of every measure that would restore the industrial peace and prosperity of the country.

At the Congress of Naples, held in April,

1920, there were 175,000 members represented by 200 delegates. The proceedings resulted in a general amplification of principles previously laid down. In addition to reaffirming the radical resolution regarding the "right to work" and the "transformation of the machinery of production," the party demanded that the Government recognize Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, etc. A general agrarian program was put forth. This had been developed in the interim since the Bologna convention.

At Bologna a special committee had been created to deal with agrarian questions. The secretary had immediately consulted with representatives of the Italian Federation of Small Proprietors, the National Federation of Small Renters and Crop-Sharers, and the Federation of Workers. The following set of principles was outlined: (1) defense of the *piccola proprietà* (small land-holding) and its development with special consideration for the small proprietor in the taxation system; (2) constitution of class committees composed of the agricultural workers of the various categories for the purpose of "negotiating in every district individual and collective agrarian contracts for the workers of the various categories"; (3) recognition of the

right to labor, and the direct assumption by means of collective rentals and agrarian coöperation of the farm administration by the peasants with the concurrent guarantee of financial aid and technical supervision; (4) in regions where there are large estates devoted to extensive cultivation, the land should be, wherever feasible, subdivided—especially for those zones near the towns, where land should be ceded by means of requisite state intervention to the worker of the locality by sale or rental.

One of the instruments for raising the standards of the Catholic peasant and intensifying production has been the Italian Coöperative Federation; and this, supported by the Catholic minister of agriculture, should, it was planned, exert constant economic pressure on the proprietors in order to extend the system of small land-holding, decrease the number of wage-earning farm-hands, secure better agrarian pacts for the peasants, thus stabilizing them on the land, particularly in the south, where existed a strong demand for the break-up of the estates. In all localities were to be established agrarian chambers (*camere agrarie*) to settle land problems and disputes.

The Naples program proper elaborated the

following general demands: (1) increased national production; (2) more equitable distribution of products; (3) emphasis upon the social function of the land, and collaboration between proprietor and renter; (4) decentralization of the agrarian state administration and the creation of organic regional commissions.

For increasing production, the platform urged: greater state financial aid; the rapid development of technical agrarian instruction; and provision that the compulsory term of military service, in the case of farm workers, be spent in farm labor on some recognized public or social undertaking.

To supplement the governmental machinery for dealing with farming conditions, there was demanded immediate creation of the regional chambers and the reform of the General Agrarian Council as described above, the work of these bodies to be coördinated with all offices, schools, and institutes; and, finally, compulsory arbitration of collective conflicts.

But the most far-reaching provisions were with regard to the social function of land. These consisted in a proposal made by Signor Martini which called for the expropriation of land for the benefit of the peasant by amending

the existing law of eminent domain to read, instead of *scopo di utilità pubblica, scopo di utilità sociale*, and to apply this principle to all lands where absenteeism, or carelessness upon the part of the proprietors, or other social needs, justified it. The Government was also to impose obligatory improvements upon all landholders. The expropriated land was to be ceded to the cultivators, and at all times the party was to attempt to increase the number of small proprietors and safeguard their rights by appropriate legislation. In addition, the right to strike was recognized, and the party was to protect the farm worker in making and enforcing contracts.

This represents the mature culmination of the Popular party's program, its fullest amplification. The subsequent work of later congresses were largely devoted to a reiteration of these ideas and to a more realistic alinement of the party in the face of the rapidly shifting political scene. A studied attempt was made to attract the more conservative Socialists, and toward the close of 1921 the party definitely moved to form a collaboration cabinet with the Socialist and Social Reform groups. Had the division in the Socialist ranks matured at this time, an entire

new orientation of parliamentary life might have been inaugurated.

The Popular bloc in Parliament consistently participated in the formation of nearly all the post-war cabinets, and with each new cabinet imposed certain definite demands as a condition of collaboration. Thus the Popular party, without any revolutionary activities, exerted a more consistent and fruitful influence upon national affairs than any of the other so-called democratic or radical groups. The Department of Agriculture was continuously in the hands of the P. P. L., and the post-war ministerial laws and decrees were enlightened and experimental.

In the latter part of 1921, the Popular group in Parliament presented an agrarian law which provided for the utilization of idle lands according to conditions that would not disturb existing land-titles. This was the law to apply the modified Visocchi Decree, which is described in Chapter VI. The agrarian chambers were also to have been established by this law, to effect what was termed "agrarian representation." These bodies were not to conflict with the existing General Council of Agriculture nor the existing regional commissions, but was to function for def-

inite agricultural areas. These chambers were to be autonomous, though under the general vigilance of the minister of agriculture, and were to be constituted of from forty-five to ninety-five persons (according to the population) elected by votes from five distinct categories: proprietors of large and average-sized holdings, the renters of large and average-sized holdings, small proprietors, small renters on shares, the colonies and farm workers. These commissions were to be invested with three fundamental functions: (1) general improvement of agriculture; (2) solution of labor difficulties; (3) compilation of agrarian statistics. The Supreme Council of Agriculture was to be reformed to consist of thirty-six members nominated by the minister of agriculture and thirty-six members elected by the eighteen new agrarian commissions by proportional representation.

It is scarcely too much to say that these decree-laws represented a more fundamental reform than all the agrarian legislation invoked previously during the period of unification. The Visocchi Decree, its application, its modification, its final crystallization into the form of a comprehensive law, represented a rational solution of the problems resulting from the war, the

land seizures, and peasant unrest, and struck definitely at that pernicious, inefficient system of absenteeism which for so many decades has made of southern Italy one of the most debased, poverty-stricken, ignorant, and backward festering-spots in the world. Of all the work done during the post-war turmoil, that by the Popular party in connection with agrarian reform stands out above any other achievement, and is refreshingly constructive in the face of continual agitation, threatening revolution, and the general disorganization of the public services.

## CHAPTER IX

### RISE OF THE AGRARIAN FASCISTI

WHEN I was in Bologna in the spring of 1921, life in that medieval university town was provincial and thrilling. Under the bizarre, color-drenched arcades ran the long echo of shooting and of marching feet. Down the narrow streets careened trucks filled with armed Fascisti. Bologna was the center of the land-war that raged for three years in the Adriatic Delta district.

The first Fascist demonstrations in the northern farming regions (also in Tuscany) were in the nature of sorties from the cities, an urban revolt of the small middle class against peasant dictatorship and boycott. These middle-class bands, striking out from the cities, were undoubtedly yoked at the outset with the large proprietors. The evidence has been only partly documented, though an extraordinary mass of circumstantial proof has been presented along with a comprehensive record of Fascist violence

up to 1922 in "Fascismo: Inchiesta Socialista sulla Gesta dei Fascisti in Italia," an account sufficiently lurid to leave the blackened timbers of truth readily visible. Certainly the landed proprietors contributed liberally to the upkeep of the Fascist squadrons and were in thorough public sympathy with their efforts. Italo E. Torsiello admits:<sup>1</sup>

It is readily understood that a generous part of the financial resources for the propaganda and action of the Fascio is contributed by the bourgeoisie (in Ferrara almost entirely landed proprietors), whose interests have been for long years directly crushed by class politics inaugurated by the local exponents of the Maximalist and pre-revolutionary theories.

Said one important proprietor of Ferrara whom I interviewed:

Our program—it is not convenient for us at present to disagree with the Faschi di Combattimento—is the gradual breaking up of the land into very small plots; this to be done by recreating the small renter, perhaps the perpetual owner. We have already taken steps to reduce the rental rates. All this should be done with the community idea in view. We should endeavor to stimulate a community life, a community cul-

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 118.

ture, and community industries in order to reduce the cost of living.<sup>1</sup>

The proprietor-subsidized character of the early violence of the Fascisti in the agrarian centers was more easily seen in southern Italy, where they assassinated some of the peasant leaders who participated in the land seizures of 1919. In Sicily some of the "bands" were linked with the *mafia*, or secret bandit societies; in Puglia they were linked with the *mazzieri*, a notorious clique of political bosses, and were clearly the instrument of private property. But in Sicily and southern Italy, where the peasants until the post-war period were very inadequately organized, the Fascisti were, nevertheless, promptly exterminated. In Puglia a general peasant outburst in March, 1921, virtually put an end to their activities for more than a

<sup>1</sup> The independent policy of the proprietor's organizations (Confederazione dell'Agricoltura) was oriented in several congresses held in Rome. It consisted, first, of "agrarian recovery" by breaking the power of the leagues, by forcibly ejecting the tenants and the colonists, and also by stimulating production to meet the needs of the nation; and, second, political action. As a result of the latter a wedge of twenty-five landed proprietors was driven into the National Chamber by the elections of May, 1921.

year, while in Sicily the *mafiocesca*, or secret peasant protective league, managed to root out the organization.

Why, it may be asked, did the movement, at the outset, collapse in southern Italy, yet succeed in the north, where the peasant leagues not only had thirty years of activity behind them but were so powerfully intrenched that non-members could scarcely find means of survival? The explanation of this has been given in Chapter VI, where was described the growing embarrassment of the coöperative colonies in the face of an ever increasing labor supply. In the north, where the peasant movement seemed strongest, it was in reality the weakest; it had had time to grow top-heavy, too prosperous to cope with the unusual post-war conditions. The peasant movements of southern Italy, on the other hand, were comparatively new, aggressive, virile. They possessed the same driving energy as did the Fascisti. Furthermore, most of the peasants of southern Italy are very religious, and the early anti-Catholic attitude of the Fascisti antagonized them. But, in the north, Fascism, beginning as a movement of terrorism, composed of university students, unemployed,

ex-soldiers, and the idle sons of the middle class, soon developed an extensive program that revolved about the peasant-proprietor idea.

The first evidence of such a program is seen in the province of Ferrara. After having broken the Socialist courage, strength, and organization in a series of violent raids, the Fascist leaders set about to attract the peasants into their own camp by a program of *spezzamento*, land subdivision. The Ferrarese, and later all the agrarian Fascisti, made their formula "La terra a chi la lavora," "Land to him who works it," curiously enough a Socialist slogan back in 1902, but now having an entirely different significance.

The Fascisti in conformity with this formula sought to have the proprietors cede the land to the peasant members of the organization by *contratti di enfiteusi*, or individual rental contracts. In fifteen days the proprietors put at the disposal of the Ufficio Terre del Fascio about thirty thousand acres of land, at the same time indorsing the Fascist "program of pacification." The Fascisti supervised the subsequent peasant contracts, but each individual received a separate allotment of ground.

The Socialist leagues broke to pieces rapidly.

In San Bartolomeo in Bosso, the league—the first example—went over to the Fascisti *en bloc* and in fact executed the first Fascist league-proprietor contract (*patto*). The Socialist leagues of Cona, Aguscello, Musi, Torelli, Quartesana, and Cocmaro di Focomorto soon followed suit. Many peasants who did not enter the Fascist ranks signed up with the Popular party or formed autonomous *sindacati* directed by joint committees of workers and proprietors. The former monopoly of the Socialist employment offices was thus destroyed. The Fascist summary of the situation was as follows: .

The nation was heading straight toward agrarian pauperism and ruin as a result of the triumphant tyranny of the Socialists who sought the universal establishment of the principle that all farm-workers, regardless of when and whence they came, should be employed as day-laborers without reference to the productivity of the soil. It has been necessary, rather, to choose that form of working the soil which will make the peasant fond of the land and at the same time guarantee him compensation in direct proportion to labor expended as well as permanent refuge and security for his family. In order to guide the farming population to an enduring state of peace, it is necessary to destroy with facts the lying formula of the

class-struggle and make the interests of Labor and Capital identical.

This explains the divergent point of view of the Socialists and Fascisti. The Fascist idea is a negation of the advantages of collective effort, and consists of unequivocal distribution of land to the peasants. In localities where large hereditary estates exist, as around Venice, the Fascist demand takes on a rather revolutionary complexion; but in general it has one main intent, to create contented peasant proprietors. The Fascisti endeavored to eliminate the agrarian proletariat, the migratory worker, the colony farm-hand; because these were all inflammable fodder for Socialist propaganda, and tranquil, productive enterprise was correspondingly discouraged.

The new Fascist pacts were, theoretically, based upon the following principles:

1. Capital invested should return to the proprietor an interest not exceeding a given limit (about 5 per cent), while all the rest should go to the worker.
2. The production of crops should be the fruit of the material capacities of the worker, and of the intellectual capacities of the proprietor,

working in perfect and constant collaboration.

3. The proprietor should receive the interest on his capital not in money but in the products of the soil. That is, the annual returns on his property should oscillate according to the agricultural year and vary concomitantly with that of the worker.

Throughout Mantua, as in the other provinces, Fascist violence ran its course, to be followed by an attempt to gain economic control. The Fascisti forcibly supervised the peasant co-operatives in accordance with the following ultimatum:

- (a) All meetings of the league to be held in the presence of four Fascist delegates, who are to control the discussion and deliberations.
- (b) Adhesion of the coöperative to the Fascio without discussion of the Fascist constitution or program, and the severing of connections with the provincial federation of labor.
- (c) No one to be given employment who is not furnished with a Fascist membership card.
- (d) The Ufficio di Collocamento to function with Fascist employees.
- . (e) Ten hours of work, of which eight are to be paid for and the other two to be for the benefit of the Fascio.

(f) Non-Fascist farmers, small and average-sized renters, proprietors, or workers on shares, to be obliged to make use, for plowing, seeding, and harvesting, of the machines owned by Fascisti or by the Fascist organizations.

Those who refused to abide by such conditions were menaced, burned out, and otherwise hindered in their labor. Throughout the Adriatic delta district the results of this two-handed policy of the Fascisti were highly successful. Intimidation, beating up of the peasant leaders, shooting up of towns, and the enunciation of a program of peasant proprietorship proved quite efficacious. Many peasants went into the Fascist ranks in order not to be molested; whole villages adhered to the Fasci in order not to have their homes shot up and burned.

Giuseppe Prezzolini in an article entitled "Fascism and the Class Struggle" appearing in "The New Republic" for November 1, 1922, gives the following animated description of some of the less legitimate methods used to build up the Fascist peasant strength:

A sample of the methods by which the Socialist or Communist leagues have been moved to go over en bloc to the Fascisti has been described to me by a friend

living in Ferrara. The president of the league, who is a farm worker of course, is singled out. When he makes his regular trip to market on Thursday or Friday, he is unfailingly beaten up by a crowd of Fascisti. In addition to the bodily harm done him and to the loss of his produce, he is prevented from transacting any business whatever in town. After this has been going on for a month, the man is in desperate straits, and does not know which way to turn.

Then suddenly he receives a visit from a deputation of Fascist: "See here, Tony, we're not trying to prevent a poor man from making a living. If you want to sell your stuff in the market, all you have to do is join us. Just tear up that red rag of yours and put on a Fascist button. Everybody is doing it. You had better come and get on the bandwagon. Once you're on no one will touch you. Don't worry about the question of wages or prices—we are looking after your interests and everything will be all right."

Naturally, since the world is not populated entirely by heroes and martyrs, the League president takes up the question with his comrades, and the League goes over to the Fascisti the next day. In other cases whole districts are terrified by armed raids, truckloads of Fascisti descending upon villages shooting to right and left, and burning or dismantling houses of recalcitrant Communists. The district at once joins the Fascisti in exchange for guarantees of immunity from such raids.

The Fascisti supplemented these direct attacks by the use of a subsidized press, and, as the various municipal administrations were frightened into resigning, gained control of the legal machinery, which was used in every possible way to intimidate or persecute the leaders. The boycott was tested out in the courts, and, though this was the *sine qua non* of a colony system, many officials of the older leagues were given extended jail sentences as a result of its use. Writes Italo E. Torsiello:<sup>1</sup>

While in the cities the work of the judiciary was eliminating the most intelligent heads, in the country districts, as a result of . . . the debacle [of the Socialist leagues] and the flight of the revolutionaries most feared, accusations began to pour into the courts regarding the criminal extortion perpetrated by the league officials by means of the imposition of fines and the discharge of workers by threat of the boycott. The collapse was complete. The red barons of the fields—the league officials—were . . . arrested. Many of them fled, abandoning their capital in land and improvements; others could not render an account of the league funds and skipped out. The first convictions in a court of Ferrara, resulting in two and even three years of imprisonment, caused all the rest to flee.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 163.

Thus the dissolution of the leagues became a phenomenon of daily occurrence. Even by January, 1920, the class Uffici di Collocamento (that conquest so exquisitely revolutionary which would have led to the installation of the Red Barons) . . . had already ceased functioning throughout the entire province.

The Socialist party, as was previously noted, had become a perfected organization including even the prosperous middle-class farmers, but it depended for its main strength upon the itinerant workers. Yet the itinerant workers succumbed most speedily to the Fascist terror and propaganda and stamped into the Fascist ranks in the hope of becoming peasant proprietors. Two other factions contributed to advance the Fascist cause. Many of the leaders were ex-labor men, ex-syndicalists, and ex-Socialists. But, more than anything else, the Fascist movement was on the upgrade of achievement; it was a live, going concern, sweeping into its orbit all those inclined to direct action, all those dissatisfied with the Socialist leadership, all those discontented with their lot as a result of the war.

Thus factions arose in the old peasant organizations, the majority of the membership often wishing to join with the Fascisti. Pitched bat-

tles sometimes occurred for the control of funds and headquarters. Instead of burning such headquarters, as had been done at the beginning, the pro-Fascist members of the old organization began taking them over in the name of the Fascio di Combattimento, and several suits were fought out in the courts to determine the rightful possessor.

The flooding of the Fascist ranks with individual peasants and by the old Red *sindacati* joining *en bloc* (as many as seventeen in one day in Ferrara) caused considerable alarm in the minds of the proprietors. Agrarian Fascism by the middle of 1922 was definitely out of their control. It had become a strong peasant movement, is the strongest in Italy to-day.

The acts of the agrarian Fascisti have sometimes been more menacing, direct, and primitive than was ever contemplated by the Socialists. Owners of idle lands have been coerced and compelled to put their holdings under cultivation. Estates have been seized as of old. Proprietors have been forcibly obliged to contribute to the upkeep of the Fascist squadrons. In general, the Fascisti have been more aggressive in looking after the rights of their members, in securing them employment, in safeguarding their labor

contracts, than the Socialists. Rather dubious comments have occurred upon some of these activities in the proprietors' newspaper, "Giornale d'Italia Agricolo." The "Sarpa" (the Plow) of Siena has protested with growing alarm at the demands made by the Fascisti with regard to the number of men to be employed.

In December, 1922, the "Bulletin of the Agrarian Association" (a proprietors' publication) complained that at Fontanellato the "*Squadristi*, armed with canes, guarded the entrance to the city hall" to prevent a meeting of the association. The paper called upon its members to "save Fascism from the subversive reactionary elements," saying that "not even the Bolshevik aberration resorted to such measures." Other reunions of proprietors' organizations were prevented in other localities.

The immediate result of the Fascist activities was the disruption of the old land-leagues and the former coöperative movement. They perpetrated a great deal of violence and temporarily reduced crop-returns. But agrarian Fascism must be recognized as one of the important back-to-the-soil movements of Europe.

On the other hand, certain partially reclaimed districts of the north can only be farmed by mi-

gratory labor. In such localities the creation of small peasant proprietors is quite infeasible. Where the land is not completely drained, where houses and stables have not been built, where roads are poor or unconstructed and railroad facilities inadequate, only men with large capital, or workers associated in coöperatives and subsidized by the Government, are able successfully to carry on farming operations. And in other localities, as well, the character of the soil or the crops makes coöperative or large-scale production highly efficient. Much of this region has been subjected to cultivation by costly, improved machinery which cannot be provided by individual peasants.

Furthermore, the coöperative farming movement in Italy has a thirty-year survival value, and the colonies are the lineal descendants of the old patriarchal entities of the early part of the century.

The whole difficulty has been in subordinating what is an essentially scientific and experimental question to creed, passion, and strife. Doubtless, when conflict has subsided, closer attention will be paid to scientific values. Doubtless peasant proprietors will continue to exist, and, for the areas and crops that are suitable, coöperative

colonies will continue to flourish side by side with large-scale private undertakings.

Similar problems also present themselves in parts of central Italy. In Tuscany, however, the situation, as distinguished from that of the Roman Campagna, is somewhat different. About Florence, for instance, the peasants are largely prosperous proprietors or renters; the cry for land subdivision has meant little to them. Previously they had been largely Socialist or Communist—a few Popularists—using their leagues to raise prices and control the markets of Florence, Siena, and Pisa. The Fascist revolt in Tuscany, more than anywhere else, was thus city versus country. Furthermore, the renters, on the whole, enjoyed liberal contracts and amicable relations with the proprietors. The Fascist drive, therefore, was an attempt to break the hold on the city markets, a student and middle-class foray. I have already described the Fascist attempt to lower the price of garden-truck in Florence by direct violence and intimidation.

The net result of browbeating the Tuscan peasants into the Fascist ranks has been nil except for the imposition of a creed of patriotism. The latest *patto colonico* of the Fascisti with

the proprietors invoked the following ends:

1. Maintenance of all the economic and moral conquests already recognized.
2. Constant regard for the moral and living conditions appropriate for the social position of the producer, of the farm-worker.
3. Tutelage of similar conditions of life for the entire colony family.
4. Stimulation of improvements in the technical methods of agrarian industry, to lessen and alleviate the physical fatigue of the worker.
5. Establishment of cordial *rappo*rt between the members of the *mezzadria* to bring about a real pacification.

As a matter of fact, the contracts have varied more in form and phraseology than in substance from those previously in vogue. The degree of pacification may be realized from an incident which took place near Certaldo, the birthplace of Boccaccio. As one approaches Certaldo Alto, a marble tablet at the entrance to a *stradella* at the foot of the hill known as Costa Vecchia invites the sojourner to climb up to hear from the vibrant voices of women, before the Fountain of Filien Meschinello, the hundred stories of Boccaccio. Near this point is the large estate of Count Arrigone degli Oddi, who shuts himself

up in his castle near Venice with twenty-five hundred singing birds to collect postage-stamps. Shortly before the Fascist *coup*, the Black-Shirts seized his lands in order to force nearly twenty-three hundred hectares of idle lands under cultivation and to oblige the hiring of Fascist unemployed. Concurrently was published a manifesto threatening all other landowners with similar treatment should they not make haste in cultivating their idle holdings. Count Arrigone promptly capitulated, agreeing to put every acre under tillage regardless of productivity, to give employment to several dozen additional farm-hands, and to reimburse the *Fascio* for all expenses entailed during the occupation of the estate.

Not until Fascism had thus definitely become a peasant movement did it reappear throughout the Mezzogiorno and Sicily. And especially was this possible because of its program of land *spezzamento*, for nowhere is land subdivision such a burning question as in the south. Also, in the interim, the ex-combatants had grown dissatisfied with their share of the land seizures. The Catholic and Socialist leagues and coöperatives squeezed all others out. Thus, in Caltagirone, Don Sturzo succeeded in having the

prefect of Catania assign, in accordance with the modified Visocchi Decree, the entire *feudo* of Pietra Rossa to the Catholic coöperative Madre Terra. Other important and extensive *feudi* in Catania, as for example that of San Pietro, were similarly assigned, and non-Catholic peasants were not permitted to participate in the land occupation. As in this district many of the Catholics are fairly prosperous, the *feudi* of Frasca, Casalvecchio, Grottecipolle, and other localities were not broken up into small plots but into tracts averaging about thirty hectares. The ex-soldiers combated this procedure, although until the fall of the Bonomi cabinet they were largely unsuccessful. However, in March, 1922, and this was typical of many other Catholic and Socialist holdings, the Collegio Centrale dell'Opera Nazionale dei Combattenti succeeded in having the *feudo* of San Pietro in Catania returned to its original owner and, through a regular contract with his agent, Engineer Asereto, had it ceded to the Cooperative Combattenti. Fascism thus not only carried an appealing program to the south, but fed upon a real grievance against the existing land leagues by large groups of the peasantry. At the Fascist convention of Naples, just before the coup of Mussolini, virtually

every part of southern Italy was represented.

But in southern Italy, and especially in Sicily, the larger constructive problems are, for all the topographical differences, similar to those of the Adriatic delta district. In fact, they are more pressing. The further one penetrates into the geographic heel, the more one notices the pernicious effects of absenteeism. Therefore, everywhere land subdivision is a live issue. But the peasants of southern Italy will find, even more than those of the north, that the conditions of the soil, the scanty rainfall, perhaps even their own improvidence in the matter of providing for seed, will make necessary extensive improvements, fertilization, costly irrigation projects, and an amplification of the existing system of rural credits. And there is need of technical education; there is need of a real war upon the mosquito and malaria, and upon the numerous pests that are allowed to flourish unchecked. Pier Occhini estimates<sup>1</sup> that in the south the farm products are reduced nearly 70 per cent because of the invasion of parasites.

The peasants of the south are in a truly deplorable state. Theirs has been a blind revolt against hopeless conditions scarcely paralleled in any

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 191.

part of the world; they have not looked beyond their burning desire to be rid of the *gabelloti*. Since the unification Government was created, about three times as much in the way of agricultural improvement has been spent in southern as in northern Italy, but with the most disproportionate results. Either the peasants will have to coöperate in providing necessary improvements, the Government must come to their aid, or they must revert to private employment under the lash of the *gabelloti*. With these aspects, the Fascisti, concerned largely with the building up their strength, have paid as little heed as have the peasants.

**PART III**  
**CLARIFICATION**



## CHAPTER X

### RISE OF LABOR FASCISM

**A**T the Fascist convention held at Bologna in January, 1922, was organized the Confederazione delle Corporazioni Sindacali Fascesi. These *corporazioni* had been springing up spontaneously in various agrarian and industrial centers, and the purpose of the new confederation was to give them unified national significance and efficacy.

The resolution of Michele Bianchi, which created the new labor organization, was supported in several speeches embodying the following ideas:

1. Labor should be loyal to the *patria*.

2. Labor should sever all international revolutionary affiliations.

3. All labor, "even the astronomer in his laboratory . . . even the jurist, the archaeologist, the student of religion, even the artist—all who contribute to our spiritual patrimony; likewise work—the miner, the sailor, the peasant."

4. Labor should achieve its ends by organization rather than by revolution.
5. Labor should collaborate in the management and operation of industry.
6. Labor organizations should place the emphasis upon individual effort and capacity rather than attempt to create a dead level of hours and output.
7. The state should not only stimulate production but should conscientiously guard the rights of the workers and see that capital at all times performs its social functions and does not oppress labor.

The aims of the federation are substantially those adopted by the Fascist party at the latter's initial political convention held in Rome in November, 1921, viz.:

Fascism cannot answer for the historic facts in the development of the *corporazioni* but wishes to coördinate their activities toward national ends.

The *corporazioni* are to be promoted with two fundamental objectives in view: i. e., as an expression of labor solidarity and as a means of furthering production.

The *corporazioni* should not submerge the individual in the collectivity, thus arbitrarily leveling the productive powers of each human unit, but rather evaluate and develop the individual's capacities.

The Fascist National party proposes to agitate for the following program in behalf of the working and employed classes:

1. The promulgation of a state law which will establish for all wage-earners the legal eight-hour day. . . .
2. Formulation of social legislation to answer actual needs, particularly with regard to the unfortunate, the disabled, and the old among the workers, be they in agriculture, industry, or offices, always provided that production be not impeded.
3. Representation of the workers in the operation of each industry, such representation to be limited to those matters which directly concern the operating force.
4. Trusting to workers' organizations that are morally and technically prepared the administration of their respective industries or branches of the public service.
5. The distribution of small land-holdings in those zones and for those crops whose productivity permits.

But just what is "National Syndicalism"? Wrote Guido Pighetti in one of the first numbers of "Polemica," a Fascist monthly magazine:

- When "Fascism" is said, also is said "National Syndicalism"; and when "National Syndicalism" is said, also is said "Fascism." . . . National Syndicalism is comprehended in this formula: "Give to the producers,

the workers with hand and brain, by means of vigorous individual education, the sense of solidarity of category and of struggle, and an understanding of the possibility of pacific collaboration between the various categories, thereby obtaining the maximum possible benefit from the association of producers and by this means the elimination of all parasitism and tyranny."

The same writer goes on to state that the only means of securing such collaboration is to organize the weakest factor in production, viz., the workers; but that the desired results can be obtained not by organization alone but by education.—There must be created an intelligent, effective aristocracy in the ranks of labor, free from doctrinaire or revolutionary beliefs. Benito Mussolini in a speech in Levanto, August 25, 1922, contended that "the Fascisti, through their national syndicalist organization should become the aristocracy of the working-class"; that "socialism—the theory of a future society—is a dead thing, both in practice and spirit, while syndicalism lives, in fact, is a condition of our type of society."

Furthermore, he has often summed up the labor attitude of the new movement in his "Popolo d'Italia," as in the issue of September 2, 1922:

Fascist syndicalism does not exclude the possibility that, in the distant future, the labor syndicates may be able to create the essential structure of a new economic régime, but it denies that the proletariat is in a condition to-day to create its own type of civilization. Fascist syndicalism is not catastrophic; it does not believe that European capitalism is entirely incapable of emerging from the present crisis. If Europe cannot be saved by the capitalist classes, certainly it will not be saved by the working-classes, and, even less, by the diverse Socialist factions. . . .

National syndicalism does not admit in any way the suspension of labor in the public service . . . and the class struggle, which for the Socialists is the rule, is for us the exception.

How has this worked out in action? The first real conflict with regard to the public-service industries came on international May day, 1922. The Fascisti insisted that the trains, the telegraph lines, the telephones, and the postal service should be kept operating on that day according to the reduced schedules demanded by the Government. The central committee of the National Association of Railway Workers. (Fascist) in Bologna issued the following manifesto:

Railway Workers!

While the first of May last year witnessed revolutionary demonstrations promoted for demagogic ends regardless of the existing misery, this year a new experiment is being followed even by the Government [partial and voluntary reduction of service].

We Fascist railway workers, who cling loyally to our nationalist program, in view of the Government's guarantees, declare ourselves opposed to any strike in the public service.

For this reason, even on the first of May, we shall fulfil our duties as railway workers and as citizens.

### Railway Workers!

Our position is also justified by the opposition attitude, for while the Government supinely and ingenuously believes that the internal enemies can be dominated by a system of continual concession and thus has provided for a limitation of the service, the subversive elements have instead persisted in their formula of a complete strike.

### Railway Workers!

Remember that the act we urge upon you, that of giving the necessary service for the first of May, will be an affirmation of your liberty and of your devotion to the *patria*.

On May 12, 1922, I visited Ferrara. Something of the old medieval grimness hovered over wall and tower of that aloof, brooding city. The broad avenues carried a jostling horde.

Thirty thousand Fascisti and unemployed had crowded into the city to protest against the dilatory steps of the Government toward relieving the unemployed problem. Most of this throng was obliged to sleep on the grass outside the *Strade di Circonvallazione* or on the Montagnone where Tasso once partially "delivered Jerusalem." The following day demonstrations were held on the Montagnone and before the gigantic *entrada signorile* of the old castle of the Este. As a result of this action, the National Fascist party was able to force the Government to promise a million and a half lire for the immediate construction of local public works, principally road-building, and to grant liberal loans for similar undertakings to all the bankrupt provincial communes.

In August, 1921, occurred a general strike. Strong opposition soon developed in Fascist headquarters, an opposition which became so militant as to menace the Government itself. I arrived in Rome from Florence during that month in time for the memorable sitting of the national chamber when news had come of the general mobilization order of the Fascisti and of the concentration of numerous squadrons at the mouth of the Tiber. Everybody's nerves were

abraded by the general strike, the burning of the "Avanti" headquarters, the seizure of the communes of Milan and Genoa, the violent destruction and conflict that was taking place in Ancona, and the ministerial order placing six provinces under martial law. I was a spectator at the turbulent scene in Montecitorio where order vanished, revolvers flashed, and the jangling bell of President de Nicola was swallowed up in screaming billingsgate.

But just as a three-day drizzle proved more effective in squelching the revolutionary demonstrations of '48 in London than all the king's horses and all the king's men, so the terrific heat of August successfully ended this early threat of a Fascist *rivoluzione di palazzo*. The day after the sitting of the Chamber described above came a noxious sirocco out of Africa, bringing with it a taste of fire; the vitreous sky shimmered and crackled, and the very walls of the century-old buildings seemed to glow. A hurried vote of confidence was given to Signor Facta, the Chamber closed its session, the deputies rushed away to the Riviera, the Communists skulked in the shade and the wine-shops, the Fascisti disbanded.

While revolution might have been anticipated

by three months, the real significance of these events proved not to be in the panic of the Chamber or the martial demonstrations of the Fascisti or the Italian weather—rather in the evidence of the strength of the Fascist labor movement. The Socialistic General Federation of Labor capitulated within a week after calling the general strike and permitted its members to be drastically disciplined by the Government. While this defeat was partly due to the split into factions as a result of Communist, Socialist, and ~~Reformist~~ tactical dissensions, equally important was the changed attitude of the rank and file and the surprising strength of the national ~~Fascist~~ labor organization, which easily dominated the situation. The train on which I was forced to travel the first day of the strike from Florence to Siena was entirely manned by a Fascist crew; Black-Shirts were on guard in each car, and a squad of eight was usually to be seen pacing up and down each station platform.

These phenomena were the result of a *volte-face* of a large proportion of Italian labor. Now, the first appearance of a pro-labor tendency in the Fascist ranks appeared in connection with agrarian Fascism. In the factories, the Fascist labor strength has been built up in

two ways: through "boring from within" the old unions, and through the formation of entirely new groups sponsored and protected against Communist and Socialist aggression by the Fascist squadrons. Thus, in many localities, a majority of the membership of former leagues has voted to affiliate with the local Fascio and with the national Fascist labor federation. In other cases this was brought about by intimidation. Many *sindacati* affiliated themselves with the Fascisti to avoid the destruction of their headquarters and the repeated beating up of their officers and members. Few unions have been able to resist such tactics. In Rome in January, 1923, I attended the meeting of the street-car workers when an election of officers was being held. A small nucleus of Fascisti kept the meeting in an uproar, and Black-Shirts paraded noisily up and down the aisles significantly swinging their heavy canes. But in this case the election went against the Fascisti by a vote of two thousand to seven hundred.

In Florence the Fascist syndicalists met in the Politeama Fiorentina Theater and, after an address by Edmondo Rossoni, the national secretary, voted the following order of the day:

The workers of hand and brain assembled in the Politeama, certain of interpreting the unanimous sentiments of the working masses of Florence, taking into account that the majority of the adherents to the Chamber of Labor of this city have renounced the vile and crooked work of their leaders, calls upon the authorities for the immediate assignment of the said Chamber of Labor to the National Federation of Syndicalist Corporations, which enrolls in its ranks the most sane and elect of the working people.

As a result of such tactics and the natural shifts of opinion in times of crisis, the internal tension of the older organizations in many cases proved utterly disruptive, and there occurred pitched battles as to which faction should control the organization funds and headquarters. Many former chambers of labor passed into the hands of the *corporazioni*.

In other instances the *corporazioni* were formed from small daring units who were willing to risk maltreatment and loss of employment. As early as the Rome convention, Secretary Umberto Pasella, himself a former syndicalist leader, estimated that half the Fascist membership was then composed of farm, factory, and marine workers. Hence it was not difficult to form provisional committees in every industry

and trade which would carry on the work of organization and propaganda. After the failure of the general strike of August, the secretary of the Venice Fascist syndicates announced that all the Red unions had hastily affiliated with the Fascisti, and more and more was this phenomenon to be observed in every locality.

Two charges have been made with regard to these Fascist activities: It is said that the Fascisti have attacked the Catholic and Socialist syndicates in order to smash the strength of labor and reduce the working-class to a miserable condition. The Fascist replies that the older organizations had assumed the character of monopolies; that, in fact, the Fascist demand for a strong, efficient nation cannot be met if the workers do not enjoy decent standards.

Mussolini, in reply to Arturo Labriola, who made a charge in the "Roma" of Naples that the "development of Fascism definitely menaced historic evolution" and that it aimed at destroying the labor movement, made the following defense:

It has been an incontestable fact: First, that where Fascism controls there has been no reduction of wages or increase in the hours of work . . . and, in most cases, the Fascist organizations have imposed higher

wages. . . . Fascism does not destroy, but assures, guarantees human conditions of existence—in the world sense and the best sense of the words—to the mass of the workers.

The second criticism has been that the conversions made by the Fascisti by force or otherwise are hollow; that men who have been dominated by revolutionary and syndicalist beliefs for thirty years, who maintained those beliefs when even the nation was at war, have not changed their minds overnight. Said the "Paese" in an editorial.<sup>1</sup>

Another dilemma immediately arises: either Fascism continues through all eternity to dominate and hold down the masses with canes, revolvers, and gasolene—and this thing would for many reasons be difficult and under any condition would perpetuate an atmosphere of terror in which the Fascist syndicates would not be able to demonstrate any real constructive value—or, on the other hand, it leaves the masses in liberty, whereupon they would return to Socialism and then . . . good night Fascist syndicalism!

Those . . . having faith in the natural solidarity of the Fascist syndicates, and therefore in the real spontaneous adhesion of the masses, give proof of small understanding of the workers who have, of course, fol-

<sup>1</sup> September 7, 1922.

lowed Socialism for thirty years merely to make an immediate and material turn-about without having assimilated any of the animating and renovating ideas of Socialism; and that to-day they will follow "spontaneously" without horror, without fear, almost gladly, the destroyers of their houses, of their institutions, of their collective patrimonies and of their thirty-year conquest, to follow another indefinite mirage. . . .

The Fascist replies that the mass of the workers were never enamoured of revolutionary leadership, that they are glad to be free from the yoke of dictatorial and dogmatic syndicates and ~~leagues~~ which used equally violent methods to build up their strength. Rossoni, talking before the first convention of Faesist marine workers in Genoa, touched upon this point:

To-day the adherents of our syndicates number more than 800,000. Many say: But are these workers sincere who before extolled Bolshevism and burned the tricolor yet now swear fidelity to the *patria*? The Italian workers have never been against the Italian nation. They were turned aside by a bunch of politicians who debased the masses to serve their own ambitions.

Nevertheless, the rush of radicals into the Fascist corporations has not taken place unnoticed by the more conservative Fascist leaders,

who have feared that their ranks were being filled too rapidly and that many workers were joining the Fascist movement who were but lukewarm in their sympathies toward so-called national syndicalism. The Fascist railway workers took a stand against permitting the Red syndicates to join their organization *en bloc*, and devised measures for scrutinizing the applications of all new members as set forth in a circular bearing the date of August 28 in which it was stated that "the recent social-communist collapse has resulted in, and still causes, as is observable, the exodus of huge masses from the Red organizations into the Fascist syndicates."

The circular then enumerates instances where, after strike failures, groups of workers have joined the Fascist organizations, and suggests the following precautionary measures:

1. Provoke and favor in every manner the disbanding of the Red Sections.
2. If there is a request for the enrolling *en masse* of the seceding members do not formally assume obligation. We have need of marking time until the situation is clarified and the Party Direction takes a stand. Therefore, it will be necessary to delay the said enrollment in order to submit the applications to the decision of the central office. Good excuse for delay.

3. Remain firm and irrevocable that the leaders be left "in banishment." We can admit the repentant members, the rapid assimilation of the masses who have always been trailers. But we should distrust unquestionably the organizers, the propagandists, the leaders of groups, the secretaries, and the councilors.

4. While promising to obtain instructions from the central headquarters regarding admission, one can and should, as is considered best, accept the individual applications, insisting that these be strictly examined, especially with regard to the morality and political faith of the applicant. If the information sought is favorable, or it can be seen that the applicant ~~was not en-~~ rolled in the *Socialist, or Communist, or Anarchist organizations*, place can be made for him in the ranks—but always as a *sympathizer*.

As presenting a special case, the rise of the Fascist marine workers is interesting. Most of the important harbors in Italy are administered by autonomous port consortiums, many of which have played hand in glove with the leaders of the Seamen's Federation, headed by Giuseppe Giulietti, and with the various radical port coöperatives. The rapid post-war expansion of the Seamen's Federation is a tangled and sordid history; the development of the organization has been involved with the d'Annunzian seizure of

Fiume, which was backed by the heads of the defunct Banco di Sconto and the Ansaldo company, and is checkered with the intrigue of two great financial cliques which have been contending in Italy for mastery. During a period of three years following the war, the Seamen's Federation dominated the shipping life of Italy; it held the shipping companies in the hollow of its palm; it dictated the conditions of loading and unloading, and held up vessels for days and weeks on reasonable and sometimes trivial grounds. It prevented shipments of munitions of war. Naturally, abuses arose. In Naples, for instance, some labor officials were said to be affiliated with the local political *camorra*, and with the *ghengi* who took favors from ship-captains wishing to be unloaded out of their turn, and who saw to getting goods through the customs free of duty, furnished spurious passports, and so on. On January 11, 1922, Deputies Coda, Celesia, Boggiano, and Banderali invited the minister of public works and the sub-secretary of the Merchant Marine Bureau to state what steps they intended to take "to do away with the growing decadence of the port of Genoa caused especially by the dictatorship of the Red workers' corporations of medieval char-

acter, leagued into a single pseudo-coöperative, which have in the economic fields abolished freedom of labor and the rights of the minority, and in the administrative field have practically absorbed the powers of the consortium, on the one hand imposing upon commerce disastrous wage-scales and conditions, on the other exploiting and oppressing the casual workers, largely ex-combatant, treating them not as comrades but as slaves, and have thus transformed themselves from workers into privileged contractors, in whose hands the greatest port of Italy is disgracefully heading toward ruin."

Whether the rise of the Garibaldi Coöperative, which was controlled by members of the federation, and which operated ocean liners, alarmed them, or whether this marked a natural reaction to the rigid control by one organization that had boycotted certain groups of workers, in any event the Fascisti found sufficient followers to enter the harbors, break strikes, pull the red flags off the various coöperative sheds, and, in general, make themselves a force. The Fascist marine syndicates grew in numbers, and in the early part of September a national convention was held in Genoa. The new organization opposed the monopolistic furnishing of labor by the

Socialist Ufficio di Collocamento; it demanded the abolition of the port consortiums; equal representation on all government commissions and workers' councils with other labor organizations; not an open shop, but open right of organization for the Socialists, Catholics, and Fascisti. Some of the early interested backers of the Fascisti had proposed the abolition of the various workmens' councils, but this was vigorously opposed, even by the technicians, and later by the Fascist organization itself. The Fascisti also built up their own coöperatives, for which they demanded the same privileges as the coöperatives already in existence. Said Michele Bianchi at the convention in Genoa: "We should carry on a work 'of recovery.' We should not be anti-coöperationist. We should conduct the coöperatives back to the functions they should serve, i. e., a form of collaboration between capital and labor. We desire that our coöperatives be placed in a position of power and, by means of free competition, to have, not a position of privilege, but a position of battle."

D'Annunzio, who ever since the Fiumian episode has counted upon the support of the Seamen's Federation, looked with disfavor upon the rise of the new organization and attempted to

bring about a reconciliation. In October a working alliance was formed, by which the two organizations were to take no action without mutual consultation, and all strikes were to be conducted jointly. Mussolini backed this pact, and, although some criticism arose among the Fascist ranks, it went formally into effect. Dissatisfaction, however, caused it to be modified a number of times, and finally on October 22 (shortly before the *coup* of Mussolini) a decision was reached to disband the Fascist corporations and have the membership enrolled in the old ~~Marine~~ Federation and the Garibaldi Coöperative, which were to amend their constitutions to include expressions of nationalist loyalty. After the revolution, however, the Fascist corporations were encouraged to maintain their independence. Further negotiations were conducted, and it now appears that the Marine Federation will disband and its members enter the Fascist unions.

The proletarian Fascisti claim to have infused a new ethical concept into the Italian labor movement, a concept distinct from nationalism and from syndicalism: Industry is a social trust, not for the spoils of factions, class-inter-

ests, or profiteers; industry must be kept going at all costs during the reconstruction period. The declared program of the National Federation of Syndicalist Corporations is: national syndicalism, evolutionary economic democracy, proletarian education, industrial peace, and co-operation. Yet the vagueness and apparent speciousness of much of the Fascist labor phaseology, the inconsistency of violent tactics with any attainment of industrial peace, the bigoted nationalistic bias of the movement, and the failure of its leaders to appreciate any of the factors making for international concord are not encouraging. The immediate effect has been the disruption of the Italian labor movement.

Labor Fascism, more primitively direct in tactic than the older movements, can scarcely become orderly overnight. Fascist peasants, as has been shown, have seized lands and imposed conditions by violence. The workers have often been no less arbitrary. The tactic of striking on the job—the White strike—was practised long before the pro-nationalist and ex-soldier elements seized the Romeo Iron Works of Genoa in 1920, as in the case of the Franchi-Gregorini establishment in Dalmine, on which instance they were praised by Mussolini. Since the rise of

labor Fascism other violent measures have been pursued. Fascist bank clerks have obliged their employers to contribute to the upkeep of the Fascist movement. In Perugia, that school-town of Raphael, in August, 1922, the Fascisti occupied the office of the Siamac factory and forced the proprietors to meet wage payments. These are isolated instances, but the Fascist workers will never accept patriotic shibboleths in lieu of good macaroni and wine. The workers of Italy are patently desirous of assisting in the reconstruction of Italy; ~~reconstruction~~ will call for arduous sacrifice, which will scarcely be given unless there is a similar spirit shown by the proprietors and the industrialists.

The Fascist syndicalists have broken up the old mold of the Italian labor movement; it has substituted tripartite instead of dual division. It has divided labor along the old historic lines of Savoyard monarchy, Garibaldian revolution, and Catholic intransigency. Italian labor is now Fascist, Socialist-Communist, and Catholic, with the first far in the lead. As a matter of fact, the Fascist labor movement could not have come into existence without the prior organization work of the Socialist and Syndicalist movements, for the idea of pacific industrial col-

laboration presupposes that the workers are as important and dignified a factor in production as the employers. Only equals can collaborate. For the workers to have become equals (even in theory), the bitter, revolutionary thrust of the post-war Socialist party was perhaps necessary and salutary. For it taught Italy and the Italian worker the realities of the situation, and created a more thoroughgoing appreciation of the needs of the post-war era. The burden and responsibility now rest upon the industrialists. If they shirk that responsibility and do not meet the new Fascist conception honestly and enthusiastically, there are Fascist *corporazioni* with a tradition of violence more direct than that of the Socialists.

The situation has been dispassionately summed up by Don Sturzo, leader of the Popular party (Catholic) :

Fascism is not economically the police or the royal guard of the rich and predatory industrial bourgeoisie, nor will it maintain the parasitic industry that lives in the shadow of the state. . . . The rapid and violent manner in which the pro-Socialist, Communist, and Anarchist leagues have been transformed into Fasci, and at the same time the pro-official heads and the dogmas of the Red International substituted with other

leaders and with other myths of a patriotic and national character . . . in no wise modifies the economic facts of the class struggle, nor disposes of the iron laws of the distribution of wealth, nor lessens the grave problem of excess labor population to which still remain closed all possibilities of employment.

Under such economic conditions there has been overthrown, by a convulsive and violent movement, a labor policy that was becoming excessive and monopolistic; the violent measures will be exhausted when resistance diminishes, but will reappear again on the terrain of the class-struggle, now maintained by factions—yesterday Socialist and Communist, to-morrow ~~Fascist~~.

## CHAPTER XI

### DECLINE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

THE Great War definitely split the Socialist party. The renegades reverted to nationalism. The small bourgeois elements drifted into the various reform groups. When peace was declared, most of these elements hurried back into the party. These and many others, discontented with post-war conditions, swelled the Socialist ranks to three times their earlier strength. But the organization machinery had been captured by the revolutionary proletariat, while the incohesive character of the movement as a whole soon caused it to break once more into jarring factions.

Even before 1901 two opposing currents were quite distinguishable: that of the reformists and that of the intransigent revolutionists. There also existed, from the time of the convention of Imola in 1903, a Centrist tendency which became more marked in the convention of Bologna the following year—a compromising sentiment

that finally triumphed with the name of Integralismo in the convention of Rome of 1905. The convention of Florence (1908) saw the return to power of the Right wing, though not without sharp opposition on the part of the revolutionaries. The party, held together by the Center and dominated by the Right until 1912, enjoyed a degree of patronage by the Government. Many members were rewarded with bureaucratic positions, and the coöperatives were subsidized. Then the more revolutionary elements—the maximalists—succeeded in throwing compromise out of the party. Their method was to be that of classical Marxian revolution, known in Italy then by the adjective *blanquista*. During the war the Socialist party was virtually obliged to suspend activities; the result was a great underground growth in revolutionary sentiment. So, at the convention of Bologna in 1918, the maximalists were able to force through a vote of party adhesion to the Third International of Moscow. At the succeeding elections in 1919 the Socialist party captured twenty-two hundred communes, twenty-five provinces, and 156 seats in the chamber. The successful candidates were instructed to sabotage the Government and to

use their position for the spreading of further propaganda.

But the influence of the reformists increased as a result of the failure of the factory seizures of September, 1920. They became known as the concentration group and oriented their program in the factional national convention held in Reggio-Emilia in October of that year in preparation for the approaching convention at Leghorn.

The strength of the concentrationists at the Leghorn convention in January, 1921, was further increased by the Twenty-one Conditions sent as a ukase by Moscow; but, at the same time, the doctrinaire attitude of the Communist elements was intensified. The result was the secession of the latter (one third of the membership) to form the Communist party.

Nevertheless, the Socialist party, in the face of wide-spread Fascist election violence, was able to conserve 122 seats (and the Communists seventeen) as a result of the May, 1921, contest. Their program stated, in part:

We have already won for the working-class a formidable social power which challenges that of the bourgeoisie, and with this the struggle continues in all fields. It has its unions for defense and its party for

the fight to the finish; it has its coöperatives; and it has its group in Parliament.

To coöperate in strengthening this power of labor and to use all means to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat, or rather to make a society founded on labor without possibility of exploitation, must be the duty of the Socialist Parliamentary group. . . .

After the split, a Prussian spirit of discipline dominated: "In the past, the discipline of the acts of the members was sufficient; for the future, there is to be demanded also the control of the expression of thought." As a result, internal differences developed rapidly. Leghorn had not really separated the revolutionists from the reformists. It had merely separated out those willing to obey Moscow unconditionally. Internal friction, the signing of the peace pact with the Fascisti in August, 1921, the quick shifting of national affairs, the changed parliamentary situation that had made possible the collaboration of the Socialists and Clericals, soon necessitated the calling of the convention of Milan. This was held in the Lyric Theater in November.

The Socialist party on this occasion, it soon became evident, was divided into four camps, but the most important division was between the



Mussolini before the Quirinale, calling upon the king



Turati and Modigliani, leaders of the Unitarian Socialistic party



concentrationists and the maximalists: The concentrationists, led by Turati, Baldesi, and Treves, were in favor of permitting the Socialist bloc to participate in the formation of a cabinet. Said Claudio Treves, "The Socialist delegates will not refuse power if it falls upon their shoulders through the overwhelming collapse of the régime." Turati maintained that engaging in political activities was a form of collaboration with the bourgeois state, that voting was collaboration, that debating in Parliament was collaboration, that the party should accordingly follow this reasoning to its logical conclusion and collaborate in the actual governing of the country, thereby assuming its fair share in the responsibility of reconstruction.

The maximalists insisted that, though the Communists had seceded at Leghorn, the party was still with Moscow in spirit. Their resolution maintained that the Socialist party was revolutionary: "its tactic should be rigidly conscious and intransigent."

They desired to instruct the parliamentary representatives "to exert pressure from the outside upon the bourgeoisie, using all the weight of their numbers and moral strength to limit the power of the executive, to safeguard all the pub-

lic power already captured by us, and, on the other hand, to impose upon the bourgeoisie . . . the proposals that the group might formulate." The Socialist deputies, it was maintained, should be strictly subordinated to the party executive committee. The resolution protested at the expulsion of the party from the Third International, for the party had always adhered to the principles of international socialism to the extent "permitted by environment and historical contingencies."

The maximalists, receiving a clear majority of 15,876, controlled about two thirds of the voting strength. The concentrationists bowed to the majority will, though iterating their determination to convert the membership to their point of view.

But the split yawned ever wider. There is little doubt that Turati (inspired by the success of Bonomi, who, expelled from the Socialist party in 1911, had become prime minister in 1921) was hopeful of ultimately swinging the rank and file behind him. Thus, heading the strongest single parliamentary group, he might reasonably have hoped to become premier. He had before him similar examples in Scandinavian

countries and the success of Scheidemann in Germany. It was with this idea that he inspired the convention of Milan in November, 1922; it was with this idea that he broke the Socialist precedent and called upon the king at the Quirinal as Bissolati had done in 1911; it was with this idea that he manœuvred the general strike of August to whip the rest of Parliament into line and force the formation of a Socialist-Catholic cabinet. While this shift brought about the downfall of the Facta Government, the move was too tardy. The aggressive Fascist tactics in putting down the general strike were so patiently successful, the prestige of the radical elements in the labor-unions and in the political field so obviously destroyed, that the Socialist deputies who had manipulated the collaboration move were left completely isolated. The Clericals on whom they had counted drew precipitately toward the Right. The Popular parliamentary group observed that "if the Socialist party had been able to solidify its formation of a legal group, the beginning of the Twenty-sixth Legislature would have received a new and fecund impulse," but it had delayed too long; the Catholic party was therefore obliged to ally itself

"with those groups which obviously enjoyed the public confidence and which could recreate an ordered state."

Serrati, who at Milan had championed party unity at all costs, now made an eleventh-hour scramble to restore himself to favor with Moscow by expelling the reformist Turati-Treves-Aragona group, rather ludicrously striking the exact moment when Moscow, which had before been dictating "purification by schism" was now advocating "purification by unification." Serrati's activities resulted in the calling of a national convention for October 2, 1922, in the Casa del Popolo at Rome. The Casa on that historic occasion, as I recall, vaunted an almost festive appearance, an almost bourgeois wealth of decoration. At the end of the hall were three platforms, one raised above the other, reminding one of the medieval paintings of the hierarchy: the lowest level served for the executive committee and the orators; the second for the president; these surmounted by the bust of Karl Marx.

Bitter discussion of technical procedure: the factions ranged from Mingrino, leader of the Ardisti del Popolo, who favored meeting violence with violence, to that of Turati, willing to collaborate with the Catholics and Giolittians. Ser-

rati pointed out that, while Bissolati had entered the Quirinal and returned with universal suffrage, Turati had returned empty-handed to witness the break-up of the general strike of August and the seizure of the Socialist communal administrations of Milan, Genoa, and elsewhere by the Fascisti. He charged that the Turati group, for parliamentary ambitions, had boycotted the general strike. He declared that in all probability "you collaborationists will end by collaborating with the whole of Fascism. . . . It is impossible to deny that at one period the bourgeoisie were frightened. But the agriculturists and the great industrialists are Fascists; the bourgeois *bloc* has been formed. You are about to ally yourself with these bourgeois elements; in fact, you have already penetrated into the capitalist-bourgeois combination. . . . You are returning, not to 1892, but to a small bourgeois democracy. . . ."

Modigliani replied for the opposing faction, stating that the unitarian elements desiring collaboration were truly Marxian in their tactic. "Fascism is, perhaps, the party of your Bolshevik Utopia. . . . The truth is, the war produced two phenomena: one a tendency of the bourgeoisie to adopt violent methods; the other,

the ruin of the Socialist movement and the economic system. It is furthermore false that collaboration was to restore the old economic régime. Our duty, instead, is quite different, and you should ask yourselves whether the proletariat can absent itself from all measures of reconstruction." Even before the calling of the convention, the collaborationists had declared themselves as favoring the nation rather than the international socialist revolution; they were aware of the resurgent pro-Italian sentiments which were booming the Fascist movement; but by changing their attitude they did not inquire the confidence of the working-class elements, while those who had accepted the nationalist point of view had long ago enrolled themselves in the Fascist *corporazioni*. The result of the Rome convention was the expulsion of the collaborationists by a vote of 32,106 against 39,119. The figures are eloquent of the decline of a party that in 1919 had boasted a quarter of a million members. The Centrists, who had voted against expulsion, seceded to join with the collaborationists.

Turati, in the discourse commenting upon his expulsion, said: "We are among the 'gradualists.' We do not wish to say collaborationists, as our

critic did, limiting the question of participation in the governing power to that of a slight collaboration to-day or to-morrow. . . . But though we separate we shall not be dead. We leave to work, to combat—predicting our labor will be fruitful. We leave with our cry of ‘Viva il Socialismo!’ If you reply, ‘Viva il Communismo!’ we shall be perfectly in accord in our disaccord.”

After the split, the maximalists attempted, in obedience to the new ukase from Moscow, to fuse themselves with the Communists. For many reasons, not the least being personal antagonisms, this proved impossible. The collaborationists founded the Unitarian Socialist party, making their official daily paper “*La Giustizia*” of Milan.

These events marked the fitter disruption of the Socialist party as a political and economic force. The party, as Claudio Treves put it, “had been Balkanized.” The last obstacle had been removed from the path of victorious Fascism—except the Government itself.

## CHAPTER XII

### CLARIFICATION OF THE FASCIST PROGRAM

**A**T the moment when the Fascisti organized themselves into a political party, toward the close of 1921, their movement, like that of the Socialists, was passing through a crisis. D'Annunzio predicted that Fascism, enmeshed in politics, could not survive.

Also, many of the Fascisti were disgruntled at the lack of public appreciation of their efforts to destroy the Socialists. The Government, with the obvious moral support of the country at large, was vigorously repressing the Fascist punitive expeditions. In addition, many Fascisti felt that they had been cleverly used by the industrialists and profiteers but were now being indifferently cast upon the scrap-heap. Many local Fasci were disbanding, *retirando dalla lotta*.

But the leaders interested in the formation of the political party had no intention of disbanding the militant Fascist groups; they merely

wished to widen the scope of Fascist influence. In the elections of May, 1921, thirty-five Fascisti and ten Nationalists had been elected by participating in the Giolittian *bloc* against the Socialists and Communists. Mussolini thus stated his hopes for the new party at the Rome convention:

There is a middle group: *La Democrazia*. But who is not a democrat to-day? Every one is a democrat both in public and private life. But democracy for us must be a means, not an end; for even the development of democracy can be a danger for Italy. However, the Democratic party lives only by dead dogmas and the art of dancing. We Fascisti have given potent injections of energy to this party. But there is a limit beyond which we cannot go. . . . Nor can Fascism ever be absorbed by Liberalism, because Fascism is something superior. Only by surpassing the methods of Liberalism [based on the theory that the Government should remain neutral in all industrial conflicts] were we able to save the nation. The Liberals will come to us.

The significance of this is not that Mussolini previsioned clearly but that the formation of the National Fascist party at this same convention definitely clarified the Fascist program. The introductory portion of the platform then adopted included the following fundamentals:

Fascism constitutes itself a political party in order to solidify its discipline and individualize its "creed."

The nation is not a simple agglomeration of living individuals nor an instrument for the special ends of parties, but an organism comprehending the endless series of generations in which the individuals are transient elements; and it is the supreme synthesis of all the material and non-material wealth of the race.

The state is the juridical incarnation of the nation. Political institutions are efficacious in form to the extent that the national values find expression and tutelage therein.

The autonomous worth of the individual and of numbers of individuals, expressed in persons collectively organized (families, communes, corporations, etc.), is always promoted, developed, and defended in the compass of the nation to which they are subordinated.

The National Fascist party affirms that in the present historical moment the form of dominant social organization in the world is the national society, and that the essential law of the life of the world is not in the unification of the various societies into one immense society, Humanity, as the international doctrine insists, but in the fecund, augurable, and pacific concurrence between the various national societies.

The Fascist doctrine has ever centered in the state, which should be reduced to its essential function of juridical and political order; in

other words, the activities of the representative organs of government should be limited to the maintenance of internal order and the guaranteeing of the national defense. The scope of the representative Parliament is to be curtailed. Government industries are to be returned to private ownership; problems of industry, of production, of the relations between various producing groups, are to be handled by regional and national technical councils.

The provisions relating to the labor movement have already been quoted. In general, they look toward a progressive application of the principles of industrial democracy and the establishment of a settled class of peasant proprietors.

For internal affairs the Fascist party advocates, above all, "the restoration of the prestige of the national state"; "the liberty of the citizen is to have a double limit: the rights of other persons and the sovereign right of the nation to live and develop."

The foreign policy is largely oriented to Mediterraneanism. The Fascisti reaffirm Italy's "right to her complete historic and geographic unity, even where that has not been attained." She is to be "the bulwark of Latin civilization in the Mediterranean."

The Fascisti have always opposed the League of Nations, "in which not all the nations are represented, while those that are do not find themselves on a footing of equality."

Likewise, Fascism does not believe in the vitality nor the efficacy of "the various red, white, and other-colored internationals," maintaining that "all the international structures are doomed to fall as is documented by recent historic experience."

Particularly is the Fascist party interested in a *rapprochement* with the peoples of the Orient, far and near—the only living expression of desire for any form of international concord. International concord is, however, not the valid motive. The Fascist slogan is, "The Mediterranean for the Mediterranean peoples." The Fascisti desire that Italy dominate the Mediterranean with the coöperation of the Moslem world for the sake of dispossessing France and England. In order to carry out this program the Fascisti demand an army and navy adequate "to the needs of its policies and the efficient strength of other nations."

The economic program for reconstruction is more concrete and may be summarized as follows:

1. Administrative decentralization to simplify public service and to facilitate the abolition of the bureaucracy; at the same time stern opposition to all regionalism.
2. The balancing of the local and national budgets. Rigid supervision of the expenditure of public funds. Simplification of the taxation system. Opposition to financial and taxation demagoguery.
3. The stoppage of all pork-barrel public works and the formulation of an organic program to include:
  - (a) Completion and reorganization of the railway system. Return of railroads, post, and telegraph systems to private ownership at the first favorable opportunity.
  - (b) Systemization and extension of highways, especially in the Mezzogiorno.
  - (c) Institution and intensification of marine transportation with the islands and the colonies. Concentration of expenditure and energy on a few ports of the three seas, giving to these ports every modern equipment.
  - (d) Opposition to the localism that has caused a wasteful dissipation of state funds.

In connection with these ideas, the Fascisti reiterate their faith in private industrial enterprise, and advocate the settlement of industrial disputes by the governmental recognition of workers' and employers' organizations and the

development of arbitration facilities. In any event, the right to strike is specifically denied in the public service.

The educational program is subordinated to the tenets of nationalism. The Fascisti desire an intensification of the war against illiteracy, the extension of compulsory schooling, emphasis upon national spirit in the elementary schools—the course of studies, the texts, and the teachers to be carefully sieved with the idea of promoting patriotism. The middle schools, the normal, professional, industrial, and agrarian schools, are to be extended and perfected. Emphasis is laid upon a “free university subordinate to the control of the state for national purposes.”

In short, in November, 1921, Fascism had become, in action, a political, economic, and militant organization. Political life was to be “quickened and instilled with greater discipline.” In the economic field the movement proposed “to stimulate the formation of *corporazioni*, whether Fascist or autonomous, with the idea of creating a working force unenslaved by the dogmas of class struggle.” For purposes of internal defense, the volunteer militant squadrons were “to be placed at the disposition of the national state.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### A DOCTRINE OF VIOLENCE

THE clarification of the Fascist program necessitated a rationalization of the tactic of violence. Fascist theories of violence are eclectic, being derived from at least three traceable sources: (1) pragmatism; (2) Hegelian idealism as developed, not by Treitschke and Lasson, but by Benedetto Croce; (3) syndicalist direct action.

Pragmatism was advocated in the reviews and books by Papini, Vailati, Calderoni, and others, who drew their inspiration from William James. If these young pragmatists did not enunciate a doctrine of violence, they iconoclastically assailed the old moralities and the old view of philosophy-for-philosophy's sake, as did Papini in his "Crepuscolo dei Filosofi" and "Pragmatismo"; and by their emphasis upon "workability" they gave the various current doctrines of force a new realistic validity.

Papini, after ironing out all the old meta-

physics, says to each man: Here, the slate is clean, make your own philosophy, create your own morality, strike your own road to power, to glory. He thus states the methodological consequences of his theories:

Pragmatism wishes not merely in the content but also in the spirit. It will no longer expatiate upon results but will counsel methods. It will no longer tell what is seen on the highway, but will make known what vehicles are necessary to arrive and see for oneself. We thus have the guide to the particular (*Taumasiologia*), that for remaking the world (*Magica*), and that for remaking oneself (*Egologia*).

Thus is completed the perfect circle of philosophy, which, starting from a state of non-expression and of pure action, crosses that of reflection on the social acts (morality), on the world (cosmology), and on knowledge (gnoseology), and returns by means of gnoseologic conclusions to the non-expression, to the practical, to life. My proposal for future philosophy is at the same time its fulfilment, the completion of the circle of philosophy; and its program, the beginning of something else. While, in general, philosophy aspires to create something stable, ultimate, definite (Hegel, Comte, etc.), I wish, above all, to do something initial, to open a new road, where others, perhaps, will travel.

This practicality of pragmatism for Papini

consists, first, in its revolutionary and destructive aspects, secondly, in the potentiality of the human will to modify the circumstances of material and social environment unhampered by conventional restraints.

The idealistic school of Benedetto Croce (for around Croce have revolved a group of lesser lights such as Pantaleoni, Gentile, Brunetti, and Rensi), though traveling different routes than the Italian pragmatists, arrives at the same cross-roads but achieves a refinement of some of the conceptions of force and right.

- Hegel, instead of identifying right and force, sought to identify justice and force, or positive law and force. And, given his topsyturvy ideal>equals-the-real, a reconciliation was effected; justice and even positive law became a form of natural law. If this was convenient Prussian doctrine, Croce, using Hegelian dialectic, nevertheless parted company with him and Treitschke and Realpolitik, seeking to bridge the antithesis between the formulæ "the right of force" and "the force of right," and between "the state as power" and "the state as justice." He concludes that moral right is a real and integral part of all superior force. Thus he admits that, as the German theorists had maintained, "Every-

thing is certainly licit that leads to ‘victory.’” But he defines victory as “not merely a momentary ‘success’ that is lost again and is promptly expiated when it is improperly achieved; but it is *the victory*, a triumph not merely *material* and ephemeral but *spiritual* and enduring.”

And, speaking of force in general:

In mechanics and in physics, we oppose greater to minor forces, and the one overcomes the other; the same conception carried over into the human-world no longer makes sense. . . . The dominator does not dominate another by crushing him, as an avalanche crushes a village; if the dominator crushes the dominated, he will have ceased to be dominator: où il n'y a rien, le roi perd su droit.

Thus for the Crôcian idealists violence is an inevitable part of the cosmic and human processes, but is without significance unless subordinated to a moral purpose and strictly disciplined to serve that purpose.

Of far more practical and actual significance for Italy have been the syndicalist doctrines of Felloutier and Sorel. These doctrines have ruled the Italian labor movement; they have decidedly influenced the activities of the Socialist party; with a slight modification of their more

primitive formulation by Bakunin, they have been adopted by the large Anarchist movement; their tactical implications and their phraseology were thoroughly absorbed by the pre-war Nationalists. And these doctrines crept in and influenced the so-called idealistic school of Italian philosophy. All the modern Italian philosophers have carefully studied Proudhon, as their quotations show; and Proudhon was too good a revolutionist not to exalt force. Similarly Pretone, Rava, del Vecchio, Perego, and Gentile have written brochures on the juridical communism of Fichte. And both Proudhon and Fichte tremendously influenced Sorel. Sorel, after patient perusal of Pascal, drew the first real distinction between "force" and "violence," a distinction which has become part of our present-day thinking, and yet which Croce, and certainly the Fascisti, have tried to transcend if not entirely obliterate.

Wrote Sorel in his "Considerations upon Violence":

The terms "force" and "violence" are used interchangeably to indicate, now the acts of authority, now the acts of revolt; but it is clear that the two acts give rise to very diverse results. I am of the opinion that there would be a great advantage in adopting a termi-

nology that would not result in any confusion, and that it is necessary to reserve the term "violence" to the second contingency. We shall say, therefore, that force has for its scope the imposition of the organization of a social order in which a minority governs. The bourgeoisie, arising in modern times, have adopted force; the proletariat react now, against them, against the state, with violence.

The theories of Sorel led to an identification of force with injustice, and of violence with justice and natural law. The fate of human affairs is determined by active minorities. The recalcitrant minority is, therefore, always right.

To summarize: Pragmatism removed the moral inhibitions to violence; the conclusions of the idealistic Hegel-Croce school of "mild-war" and "mild-rule" apologists were seized upon to buttress up the Fascist use of "internal violence for a moral purpose" and to create a theory of "violence within limits"; Sorelian syndicalism clarified the relations of minorities to the state and provided Fascism with a new tactical morality.

Out of these three sources has grown a type of thinking best described as Fascist. Various Fascist theorizers such as Sergio Panunzio and Amerigo Namias have threshed through the

whole of modern Italian philosophy to round out a coherent justification of Fascist direct action. Thus Panunzio in his "Diritto, Forza, e Violenza":<sup>1</sup>

Violence, and this bursts forth from the depths of life, from the entrails of the spirit of the world, is free and at the same time necessary; it springs *from history and becomes in turn worthy of history*. Violence is spirit, not matter; reason, not instinct; and, to the extent that it is reason, has its limits, its criterion, and its goal. Violence is not irregularity, caprice, arbitrariness; and even less is it brutality or delinquent criminality. It is a power which knows how to obey its internal limits. Life, which is a great violence of every day and every hour, is essentially limited. . . . It is said that violence accommodates itself to what it serves. We believe that the tendency of violence to achieve its ends is intrinsic, organic, not mechanical. Violence is not separated from its end (which is natural law) but is all one with its end, co-natured, co-substantial with its end; better, violence is nothing but an external aspect of the end; the manifestation, the vital externalization, the epiphany of the end, which is natural law.

These theorists have developed the Crocian suggestions into a justification of war and violence within limits until this has become a cur-

<sup>1</sup> Page 56.

rent Fascist sophism and finds repeated echo in the writings and speeches of Mussolini and in the words of such leaders as Piero Marisch, nationalist of Venice.

The most disturbing inconsistency involved is that the Fascisti, advocating violence and revolution, also advocate the strong state. The Socialists, in accordance with the thought of Marx and Engels, justified their violence by the theory of surplus value, capitalist class rule, and the materialistic conception of history. The Fascisti, being likewise obliged to rationalize their violence, accomplished this Freudian legerdemain by characterizing their violence as "neutral," by assuming that it was identical with the "force" used by an organized state for the enforcement of "law." They drew a distinction between legal and illegal revolutions; they proposed to exercise a "rational violence," a "surgical violence," a "violence within limits." In identifying their own violence with the legitimate "force" of a state, they not only abolished the Sorelian distinction, but they were obliged to assume a portion of the State prerogatives, because the state had defaulted, had abdicated part of its powers. The Fascisti said: "We are the state. We are the new Italy."

The idea of a strong, or, better, super-state, is derived from the pre-war Nationalists, who borrowed their ideas from the Prussians and made a true Italian hybrid by wedding this concept with the Sorelian theories of syndicalism and a mystic Buddhistic resignation to the "fact of the most strong"—at the same time assuring themselves that they were the most strong. When the state is weak, they argued, then syndicalist methods are necessary to strengthen it or overthrow it; when the state has become strong, it must maintain its position at home by war and the preparation for war. In any case, the individual should sacrifice everything for the state. If this conception is Prussian on one hand, it has a Spartan idealism when transmuted into Italian terms.

In accordance with these ideas, Enrico Corradini, in his "Il Nazionalismo Italiano," published in 1914, attacked the Liberal party for its avid protection of the Savoyard bourgeoisie. The "Liberal party should have proceeded to combat Socialism, not because Socialism attacked the bourgeoisie, but to the extent that Socialism, in attacking the bourgeoisie, attacked the nation." He saw "the men of three periods, Liberals, Democrats, and Socialists, mixed together . . ."

saw them "coöperating toward the same aim of dissolving the state." If these three groups in political control of Italy's destinies were betraying the Government they were directing, then the force for the salvation of the state must come from without, from the patriotic, virile forces of the nation. This was the argument of the Nationalist before the war; it is the argument of the Fascist to-day. The Nationalists believed in direct action but largely reserved it for aggression in the Irredenta districts in order to stir up sentiment in the home-land and arouse the Government to firm action; the Fascisti since the war have carried violence into every reach of civil life.

Hence their justification, hence their assumption of the right to act as the true guardian of the historic Italian state; their violence became force, their revolution became legal. They took a more arrogant and arbitrary position than the Bonapartists, who drew a distinction between "legality" and "law" to justify their civil strife and their seizure of power; "The law is not violated if the country be saved," declared Napoleon. With the Fascisti also, democracy has ceased to be a means. Every minority may now declare itself to be "the state."

The Fascisti undertook and achieved the practical application of their doctrines. That practical application, since it is necessary to an understanding of how the Fascisti rose to power, may be considered under six heads: (1) character of violence; (2) the social function of violence; (3) the limits of violence; (4) the weapons of revolution; (5) the scope of revolution; (6) war.

The character of violence was set forth by Mussolini in Triest on September 20, 1920:

Struggle is the origin of all things because life is full of contrasts. There are love and hate, black and white, day and night, good and evil. And these contrasts are never reduced to equilibrium. Struggle will always be in the depths of human nature. To-day it may be the struggle of economic purposeful war, but the day in which there is no more struggle will be the day of melancholy, the end, the ruin. . . .

In "Il Popolo" Mussolini has, on numerous occasions, waxed lyrical about the beauty of violence, as the following excerpt, translated by the New York "Nation,"<sup>1</sup> indicates:

The fact can best be explained by applying the concepts of violence that Sorel developed magnificently.

<sup>1</sup> June 29, 1921.

It was the "prestige of violence" that gave victory to the Fascist candidates. The great popular mass submitted to the fascination of violence, which is the creator of valor and the resuscitator of enthusiasms. . . .

If the Italian Socialists had read Proudhon, they would have known what admiration this great revolutionary had for Force, and how he studied it, sifting through all the immense fecundity of social facts in search for it.

At the bottom of the present Fascist victory [elections of May, 1921] one encounters a case of "*force that creates right.*"

At the Social Theater of Udine on September 20, 1922, he gave his ethical justification of violence at more length:

Violence is not immoral. Violence is sometimes moral. We contest the right of our enemies to lament our violence, because, compared to that which was committed in the unfortunate years 1919 and 1920, compared to that of Bolshevik Russia, where two million persons have been destroyed and where other millions of individuals languish in prison, our violence is child's play. Furthermore, violence is decisive, because at the end of July and August, in forty-eight hours of systematic violence, we obtained that which we have not obtained in forty-eight years of preaching and of propaganda. Therefore, our violence is resolutory of a

situation; it is conscientious, highly moral, sacrosanct, and necessary. . . . There is a violence that liberates and a violence that enslaves; there is a violence that is moral and a violence that is stupid and immoral.

The social function of violence is the transformation of society:

We are not absolutely of the past, bound, chained to stones and walls. In the modern city, everything must be transformed. For the street-cars, the automobiles, the motor-cycles, the old streets of our cities no longer serve; for in these are carried the surging wave of civilization. It is necessary to destroy in order to create more beautifully, greatly, and newly. But never destroy with the savage pleasure which breaks the machine to see what is inside. We do not refuse to change even the spirit of the city, just because the spirit of the city is delicate. To me no necessary social change is repugnant.

The Fascisti thus arrive at violence by the following route: The world is dualistic; struggle is inherent in dualism; dualism and struggle contend in every human breast; struggle is synonymous with violence. Violence liberates, creates. Therefore, violence is not immoral; the morality of violence depends upon its purpose; the morality of the purpose is alone significant. The so-

cial purpose of Fascist violence is destruction in order to create. Fascist violence is therefore moral.

But violence is to be limited to its purpose and is never to overleap itself. Violence is to become the instrument of intelligence. If violence is carried beyond its proper limits "it defeats its own purpose," "breeds further violence which thwarts the desired end." Said Mussolini in Bologna, April 3, 1921:

We do not make violence a school, a system, or, still worse an esthetic. We are violent whenever it is necessary, but I add immediately that it is necessary to conserve in the necessary violence of Fascism a line, a character clearly aristocratic, or, if you prefer, clearly surgical. Our punitive expeditions, all that violence which fills the daily papers, should always be of the character of a just rectification and a legitimate reprisal.

Violence for the Fascisti is a means, theoretically of no more importance than any other means, though clearly of more importance than democracy. What other means exists, the Fascisti have nowhere satisfactorily elucidated.

Organized violence when directed against the state becomes revolt; if successful, revolution. Revolution, the overthrow of the existing state, was always the ultimate objective of Fascist

violence. Mussolini on February 6, 1921, in Triest, definitely pointed out what must be the weapons of successful revolution:

To-day in Italy we find two kinds of individuals; the one the type of Malagodi or Papini, who take d'Annunzio to task for having survived the Fiumian tragedy, and those who take Mussolini to task for not having done some small slight thing easily and gracefully which they call a "revolution". . . .

The Fasci di Combattimento have never promised to make a revolution in Italy in case of attack on Fiume, and especially after the defeat of Millo. In addition I personally have never written or made known to d'Annunzio that the revolution depended upon my caprice. I am not a bluffer, and I do not sell smoke. Revolution is not a *boîte à surprise* that leaps up at pleasure. I do not carry it in my pocket, and neither do those carry it with them whose names fill all mouths loudly and for practical action do nothing but riot in the piazzas. . . . To-day history teaches that revolution is made with the army, not against the army; with arms, not without arms; with the movements of drilled groups, not with amorphous masses called into piazza demonstrations. Revolutions arise when they are supported by a certain amount of sympathy on the part of the majority; if not, they grow cold and fail.

In his speech in Udine, about a month before the Fascist revolution, Mussolini stated even

more specifically the steps that would be followed. He traced the creation of the Italian unification movement, showing that two forces had entered through the breach at Porta Pia to wrench Rome from the papacy: the Piedmontese and Savoyard bourgeoisie, and the Garibaldian revolutionary elements. He went on to say that Fascism intended to reenter Rome much as Garibaldi had done, bringing a fresh impulse to the national life, yet maintaining the integrity of the institutions of the country, including the monarchy:

At bottom, I believe that the monarchy has no interest in obstructing that which for convenience we may call the Fascist revolution. . . .

On the other hand, it is necessary to prevent the Fascist revolution from putting all in jeopardy. Some firm point must be left in order not to give an impression to the people that all has fallen, that all should be reconstructed, because after the present initial wave of enthusiasm will follow the waves of panic, and perhaps the succeeding waves would be able to overwhelm the first. However, matters are very clear: demolish the entire social-democratic superstructure.

If these are the weapons of revolution, it is also seen that revolution must be kept within "limits." It should be ruthless in destroying its enemies, yet once in power eager to conciliate

opposing tendencies. This is in accordance with what Mussolini has termed the "second phase of revolution"; he declared at Triest:

Let us make, solely for argument, the hypothesis of victory, with the fall of the Government and the régime. The second step? After the more or less easy demolition, what direction would the revolution take? Social, as some Bolsheviks wish—those with the formula "always further to the left" . . . or national and Dalmatian and reactionary as the others wish?

Is there no possibility of conciliation between these two currents? For a social revolution, what significance would the territorial question, and precisely the Dalmatian question, have?

Thus Fascism attempts to reconcile two great tendencies that have exhibited themselves in post-war Italy. It is an attempt to synthesize the proletarian violence as represented in the factory seizures with the nationalist violence as represented by the Fiumian foray of d'Annunzio, to destroy the effective value of both organized movements, attract the shattered factions into the Fascist camp, hold the violence of both within limits, directing it against the weak and corrupt Government in order to establish a state of potential worth. Thus, the revolution ac-

complished, social or national as one cares to consider it, the struggle is inevitably carried over into international conflict. The world struggle of the nations, it happens, is for power in the belief that power brings culture and civilization. War, then, is considered, as was violence, a stimulating, a creating force.

To-day every Fascist sees a projection of the earlier violence of the movement into another Santa Guerra which will liberate Italy from the powerful nations of the north. As a Fascist sympathizer expressed it to me: "We no longer hold the Anglo-Saxons and the Germans in awe.. We know their genius and their weaknesses. And we shall take advantage of their weaknesses to liberate ourselves and become their equals or superiors. We have given as much and can give even more to the world. All that is necessary is faith in ourselves. You people of the north have taught us how to liberate ourselves. We shall make use of the weapons you have given us in order to break your hegemony."

The question of war, therefore, leads directly to a consideration of the international program of Fascism.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FOREIGN POLICIES

THIRTY years ago, when a group of German capitalists wished to plant a factory in a historic corner of Venice, the Italians "rose like lions after slumber" to protest against the sacrilege. But thirty years have been sufficient to decidedly alter the Italian point of view. A new spirit is abroad in the land. To-day gasoline motor-boats whizz through the Venetian canals; doll and toy factories have crept into some of the fine old palaces. When a tourist praises Botticelli or Gozzoli or the Pitti Palace, the Fascist replies, "Yes, but look at the Fiat Automobile Works, look at the textile factories of Milan and Turin, look at the Ansaldo munition plant." Young Italy, even though the country has no mineral resources, insists: "We must have factories; the nation must develop industrially. We are no longer a museum for antiquities. We are not a curiosity-shop for tourists; Italy has a great tradition of power and

conquest, a great history, a long record of accomplishment. Her cycle of achievement is not ended. She is just beginning to lift herself into the first rank of the first nations."

In thirty years beauty has ceased to be something worth battling for. True, when Italy annexed part of northern Africa, the first administrative act was the restoration of the triumphal arch of Marcus Aurelius and the instituting of archæologic researches on the site of Cyrene, and one of the demands of the peace treaties with Austria was the return of long-coveted art-objects; but, in the main, sordid materialism has laid its stodgy hand upon the "mother of beauty." In common with most of the nations of Europe, present-day Italy is avidly covetous of wealth and power, a spirit that permeates the public at large. And in few Occidental countries is the life struggle so debased. A steadily increasing population in a land shorn of natural resources is increasing the bitterness of this struggle and the pressure on the Italian frontiers.

About three decades ago, Italy, under Crispi, was making her first tentative experiments in Mediterranean expansion. Since then she has watched Mediterranean developments with a

hungry eye. She has absorbed little strips of desert here and there in Africa; she has engaged in a war with Turkey for Tripoli. The long-standing agitation over Italia Irredenta dragged the country into the Great War.<sup>1</sup> Italy has committed herself to a policy of Mediterraneanism.

Corrado Zolli, former subsecretary of foreign affairs under d'Annunzio, has, in his "Le Giornate di Fiume"<sup>1</sup>, expressed the current sophism of this imperialism:

From the Alps, from the Carso, from the Piave, has stepped forth a nation of 40,000,000 inhabitants . . . the second great continental power of Europe, constricted in the long land-pier that reaches out toward the east and toward Africa—seething with energy that will burst over its neighboring European and African confines; for from Marseilles to Tunis, from Triest to Smyrna, from Alexandria to Tripoli, nothing is heard but the language of Genoa and Venice, of Bari and Palermo—even the distant shores of the two Americas are fecundated with the intelligent labor of our people. This nation cannot but respond to the stirrings of its strength. Sooner or later it should and will regrasp its proper post in the world.

Italian imperialism, as set forth in Nationalist

<sup>1</sup> Page 187.

and Fascist writings, looks forward to the acquiring by negotiation or the seizing by war of all regions where the Italian tongue is spoken. Italia Irredenta is still a watchword. The coveted regions include part of old Savoy with the city of Nice; Corsica, controlled by France; Canton Ticino in Switzerland; Fiume; Dalmatia; and the British-administered island of Malta. Also, the Fascisti assert that Tunis is rightfully Italian, that Italy should have naval bases in Albania and should have her promised share of Asia Minor, and that if Constantinople is to fall to any outside power Italy is the rightful heir.

The most impassioned interest of the Fascisti centers in the Adriatic. They perpetuated the long controversy over Fiume. The Fascisti were always opposed to the Treaty of Rapallo, which gives Fiume its historic status of a *corpus separatum*, and which awarded Porto Baross (the most important portion of the waterfront) to Jugoslavia. That this stipulation was to give legitimate egress to the shipping of Sussak (a Croat town across from Fiume on the left bank of the Eneo River) could not dull the Fascist remembrance that Sussak had been boomed before the war by the Hungarians in order to offset Italian Irredentism. Nor will the Fascisti

admit that the people of Fiume are content with their independent status. The Fascisti refuse to bow to the fact that Italian sovereignty over Fiume would mean the severance of the city's relations with the hinterland, as has occurred in the case of Zara. The Fiumians whenever they have had a real chance to express their opinion have invariably voted for the Zanella, or neutral, candidates; and the Fascisti have been obliged to maintain a dictatorship in Fiume practically ever since the withdrawal of the d'Annunzian legionaries and the Italian *bersaglieri*.

The Fascisti demand not only Fiume, but all of Dalmatia—for historical, sentimental, and strategic reasons—though the Italian population there probably does not exceed 10 per cent. Albania is to be maintained an autonomous state, to keep Greece and Jugoslavia apart, serve as a buffer for Italy, and prevent a strong government from sharing control of the Straits of Otranto. For similar reasons, Montenegro is ultimately to be recreated. The Adriatic is to be made Il Golfo, as in the days of Rome and of Venetian hegemony.

The economic importance of the Adriatic cannot be over-emphasized. That narrow inland sea is a long arm clutching at the heart of

Europe but breaking its fingers on the Alps. It is the open road to the Mediterranean and the fabulous East. Three gates open into this important roadway: Venice, Triest, and Fiume. To these ports slide down the railroads of central Europe and the Balkans, loaded with manufactured goods, hides, tallow, timber, and meat. Before the war, Triest, with its marvelous Tauern Railway of 1909, served the masters, Germany and Austria; Fiume was the servants' entrance for the humbled Croats and Serbs. Venice was a romantic tourists' paradise, commercially the least important.

This division was symbolic of a historical racial struggle for the control of this sea. Three races early contended for mastery: the Latins, the Teutons, and the Magyars. Ever since the Roman Empire, perhaps before, northlanders have been crowding down toward this exit. After the ninth century the Slav tide washed over the Julian and Dinaric Alps, and ever since has swamped the Italian shore cities, which in the days of Venice were strung like a necklace of pearls all along the eastern littoral. Italy, in seeking to dominate the Adriatic, is therefore following century-old precedent. The Germans have been pushed back. Triest is in Italian

hands. The Magyars no longer count. But the Slavs have still to be measured. They are united in a young state avid to maintain its foothold on the Adriatic.

The Fascisti maintain that the control of this waterway should be Italian; they see in the prolonged struggles around its shores a never-ending record of menace to Latin civilizations. But they fail to see the dangers inherent in the control of the Adriatic by one race, the rivalry, the ancient reiterated struggles that this will inevitably recall to life: They cannot appreciate the right of Jugoslavia to a free and unrestricted outlet upon this waterway.

Therefore they are not merely opposed to the Treaty of Rapallo (and the subsequent Protocol of Santa Margherita) but consider it a betrayal of Italy's sacred interests. Said Mussolini in Triest:<sup>1</sup>

The central committee of the Fascist party gave its judgment on the Treaty of Rapallo, finding it acceptable for the eastern boundaries; unacceptable for Fiume; insufficient and to be opposed with regard to Zara and Dalmatia. . . .

The Treaty of Rapallo is an unhappy compromise against which the "Popolo" directed many pages of

<sup>1</sup> February 6, 1921.

criticism. . . . An attempt was made to explain how victorious Italy came to participate at Rapallo. . . . It is necessary to recall that the Allies, two of them being Mediterranean . . . cannot look with good grace upon the rise of Italy to Mediterranean power, which explains the zeal and all the more or less crooked manœuvres which were used to create in upper and lower Adriatic the maritime enemies of Italy—Greece and Jugoslavia. Rapallo is explained by remembering Wilson and his so-called “experts,” the absolute lack of Italian propaganda abroad, the deathly tiredness—perfectly explicable—of the people. Rapallo is explained by the Convention of Oppressed Nations held in Rome in April, 1918; and that convention was a re-opening of the unlucky page of Caporetto. . . .

On November 12, 1920, we paid with Rapallo for the defeat of October 24, 1917. Without Caporetto there would have been no pact of Rome. . . . But in April, 1918, was created—with the consensus of all Italian public opinion, including ours and the Nationalists—the irreparable; there was elevated by the Allies to effective and potential rank, our worst enemies. Be it known . . . that these [enemies] received even on our boundaries their relative share of the common booty. After the Treaty of Rapallo it was impossible to plant the knee on the breast of Jugoslavia; this is the truth. Thus it has happened that the Italian people, tired and impoverished, unnerved by two years of useless negotiations, demoralized by intriguing poli-

tics and by the tremendous wave of post-war dissatisfaction, against which only the Fascisti have effectively reacted, . . . accepted the Treaty of Rapallo without manifestations of joy or remorse. . . . We have always considered it as an ephemeral and transitory thing. . . .

Says Pietro Gorgolino in his "*Il Fascismo nella Vita Italiana*":<sup>1</sup>

While France and England . . . day by day, are extending their possessions . . . we have lost, are still losing, territory which was civilized, fecundated, and, only yesterday, defended with tooth and nail by our indigenous people. . . . In the Treaty of Rapallo the rights of Italy were misunderstood. According to Fascism, therefore, the only remedy is to return to the pride of our race and the rights of our civilization, and the high destiny of our country. Jugoslavia, plethoric, artificial, anti-Italian, will follow the inevitable Macedonian-Balkanic convulsions. Italy, on the other hand, has entered the wide and beautiful path of its ascension. This Fascism invokes, the upward path of peace, of order, of labor, for the country; of that splendor by which, in the time of Rome and Venice, were attracted to the breast of the mother-country the glorious cities of Dalmatia and every barbarian beyond the Alps. We have lost, for the present, Dalmatia. We must now save the future.

<sup>1</sup> Page 178.

The Adriatic question, which, if the Fascist attitude is maintained, will lead inevitably to new and disastrous conflicts with the Slav populations to the east, is part of the larger Mediterranean question.<sup>1</sup> Italy demands the Adriatic not merely for strategic reasons but because it is the key to the control of the Mediterranean. And once more this inland sea has become the courtezan of the nations, not for her jewels and barbaric splendor but for the trade of India, the wheat of the steppes, the cotton of Asia Minor and Eritrea, the oil of Baku and Mosul. The Fascisti maintain that Italy historically and geographically is the natural leader of the Mediterranean peoples. That, at present, Italy is a modern Andromeda gagged and bound at the edge of this, her home sea—they, naturally, assuming the rôle of Perseus. France snatched Tunis from under Italy's nose (or heel), and the Fascisti regard Tunis as part of the fatherland. Only Tripoli, a barren, unproductive shore, was left. Italy went into Tripoli eleven years ago at frightful loss to obtain a bit of land which is unlikely ever to pay the cost of its taking or the cost of its holding—"no profit but the name." And Italy's communications even with Tripoli are broken by Malta and the headland of

Tunis. Italy feels herself constricted in the Laocoön coils of French and English imperialism.

And the Fascisti maintain that their country has prior moral claim to Asia Minor, to the hegemony of the straits and Constantinople, than either France or England. But their slogan is "The Mediterranean to the Mediterranean peoples." D'Annunzio in his latest political volume declares that the hour has struck for all the weak and oppressed nations, all the down-trodden peoples of the world, to throw off the imperialism of France and Britain. The Fascisti would be only too willing to lead such a crusading revolt. In a liberated Mediterranean Italy would have nothing to fear; she would have a tremendous economic advantage; she would be free to exercise those gentle commercial restraints on less developed countries which nations with imposing fleets and superior resources may ever exercise—restraints which are now exercised by England and France at Italy's expense.

This rise of a new Italy in the Mediterranean may very possibly be due, not only to the attainment by the new Italian state of a fresh cultural homogeneity, not merely to expanding popula-

tion, but to subtle world currents of trade which are as yet scarcely recognizable. The great center of world exploitation to-day is the Orient. Europe, though apparently doomed to a continuous series of nationalistic convulsions, a relative paralysis of its economic and cultural efforts will, for decades to come, remain economically superior to the Orient. The Orient, therefore, offers a better commercial field for exploitation than the self-sufficient new world. This will inevitably increase the importance of the Mediterranean. It will inevitably increase the importance of Italy, which will once more become the key country for much of the commerce of Europe. Such trade shifts have remade nations. Italy may again become a great emporium. The Fascisti, in looking toward Italian expansion in the Mediterranean, may be obeying a profound law of change—one of the most important commercial shifts of history.

In the preceding chapter, I pointed out that Fascism is opposed to the League of Nations until such time as all the nations shall be put on an equal footing. In general the Fascist policy is anti-French and anti-English. It was, when the Wilsonian exploits with regard to the Adri-

atic still rankled, mildly anti-American. Said Mussolini:<sup>1</sup>

The foreign policy of Italy has fallen into a grave error. It has exalted too much ideologic ends; law as opposed to violence, good rather than evil, and so on. Italy is the one country that has taken everything seriously. Even Wilson, that false prophet, instrument of the Anglo-Saxon imperialism for the world monopoly of maritime communications and prime materials, was believed . . .

To-day events demand that the opposition to the disintegrating, anti-national forces should become intelligent purpose, clear and complete understanding, organized force—not for contingent necessities, but for historic ends. And toward this Fascism tends. Fascism proposes, with intense faith, a great Italy, and combats with every energy the pernicious ideologic hallucination of anti-national humanitarianism. It believes that the one way for the Italians to collaborate in the development of human civilizations is to be as far, and as worthily as possible, Italians.

He charges Nitti with betraying the country and insists that Italy should be independent of Anglo-American intrigue.<sup>2</sup>

The American financial groups with which Nitti ne-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Gorgolino, op. cit., pp. 171 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., pp. 198 ff.

gotiated were, precisely, of the Democrats, that is of those most strongly bound to an anti-Italian policy. . . .

The beginning of the Nittian degeneracy consisted in obscure conspiracies with the international plutocracy which . . . had found a means of sustaining and serving a part of the new Italian banking plutocracy to the injury of Italy . . . .

It was attempted . . . to cede to Americans the absolute hydro-electric monopoly in the Trentino, including Alto Adige, and, if the project was not followed out, it was solely because of the anti-Nittian opposition. In substance, one part of the Italian plutocracy, by means and agency of Nitti, were given spirit and body by the international plutocracy, prevailingly Wilsonian, which acted for the injury of Italy.

The intentions of such an underhanded coalition are revealed in the press of Lord Northcliffe. Italy was to renounce every idea of predominance in the Adriatic and Mediterranean. Cattaro and Sbenico should be naval bases against Italy. Fiume should be free, as Danzig, and as Constantinople, with its moles, its docks, its stations, railroads, and banking offices for the exploitation and the ambition of the international plutocracy. Even Triest (see "The Times") was to have been declared a free port, that is, a non-Italian port, internationalized and Anglo-Americanized. . . .

Besides . . . these gross affairs, there were other projects no less underhanded and no less serious, with

monopolized commerce of cereals, coal, coffee, exchange, etc.

At the head of each of these monopolies was placed a small bunch of crows and hawks, who were to steal the hide and skins off the people. .

The general international alinement of Fascism is less significant than its Adriatic and Mediterranean policies. Quite in accordance with instinctive human behavior, while the Fascist program for the Adriatic and Mediterranean is egoistic, self-centered, Machiavellian in all the worst ranges of that protean word, in international affairs the movement can afford to be quite idealistic and liberal. The Fascisti desire the liberty and freedom of other nations, Jugoslavia and Greece excepted. Thus in speaking of Germany they say:<sup>1</sup>

A country such as Germany—immense labor market, tremendous productive machine—cannot collapse in the heart of Europe, already so disordered, without dragging down in its ruin the other countries, without making the world more miserable and upturn. Europe cannot reconstruct itself by making a desert in the middle of the continent. Haven't we had, perhaps, enough with the Russian desert? To avoid the col-

<sup>1</sup> Gorgolino, op. cit., p. 192.

lapse of Germany, leaving her means sufficient to live and labor, to buy and sell, to reconstruct herself and to coöperate with her resources in the reconstruction of Europe, is in the supreme interest of the civilized world.

Thus, where Jugoslavia is not in question, the Fascisti are able to spare part of their exalted d'Annunzian rhetoric for the rights of other nations and the brotherhood of man and to weave a most entrancing veil of glowing words about the vision of international peace. They can invoke that "international unity of European peoples as dreamed by Mazzini, Saint-Simon, Proudhon, Victor Hugo, Carlyle, Fourier, Tommaseo, and Lassalle." But even here, even in the case of Germany, there is still the joker. Writes Alfredo Signoretti in the "Gerarchia,"<sup>1</sup> directed at that time by Mussolini: "For us Italians, a betterment of the condition of Germany and of the other defeated nations would be good, without, however, their regaining the position they held before the war. . . ." It should not happen that "as a result of the breakdown of the German Empire, a French hegemony be created that would be dangerous to

<sup>1</sup> January, 1923.

Italy." For, freed from the problem of the Rhine, "France would gravitate immediately toward the Mediterranean."

The real key to the future course of action by the National Fascist party is its policy of Mediterranean imperialism.

## CHAPTER XV

### VERSUS THE LIBERAL STATE

CAVOUR founded the Liberal party in Savoy at a time when the word "liberal" was stuffed with spiritual meat. "I believe," he explained, "that there has been raised a barrier so high that reaction will never succeed in overthrowing it." Cavour hoped that the party would continue to be the balance-wheel for that new Italian state; that it would offset continental reaction, on the one hand, and, on the other, the revolutionary fervor behind the Garibaldian Red-Shirts and the Mazzinian Young Italy Society, both of which were of far less worth for governing a nation than for capturing kingdoms.

But Cavour's own efforts to create a united Italy caused him to batter holes in the wall he had raised. By the time unification had been achieved, the Liberal party had become weakened by political deceit and trading; as the governmental party, it was obliged to carry on its work in an atmosphere of smug self-righteous-

ness befogged by the same sort of diplomatic intrigue in which Cavour had excelled every European statesman of his day. The Liberal party soon became the host of a parasitic bureaucracy. To win its way, when the Government needed many friends and could not afford enemies, it had to buy favor at any cost. The governmental offices were jammed with idlers; the bankrupt treasury staggered under burdens that would have alarmed a long-established state. The Italian nation and Government were born old; like the hero of a yarn by Fitzgerald, they needed to acquire youth. But though the Italian nation has been growing younger for fifty years, the Government has been growing older, more decrepit, more incapable of any efficient action.

Giovanni Papini in his essay on Cavour thus characterizes the preliminary period:

The first fifty years of the history of Italian unity is most dolorous and opprobrious for any sentient Italian: defeat by sea and land in Europe and Africa; dependency of our politics upon France, and now Germany; banditry and revolt; civil war and diplomatic humiliation; financial scandals and parliamentary and election corruption—and what more does not need to be set down. The antithesis of regeneration! Before '60 it was hoped, with the leadership of Cavour, to get

out of the filth; after '60 the filth grew higher, grew so high that Italy could bathe comfortably in it—as they had not been able to do in blood. To old Depretis the remark was made one day that this filth had reached the eyes. And he, placing one finger beneath his lower lip, cynically replied: "No, only as far as here."

In addition to these inherited ills, the industrialists of Lombardy and Piedmont, seeking to strengthen their relations with the state, made use of the great liberal traditions with which the Italian Government had been founded; they gained possession of the machinery of the Liberal party. As a result the Liberal party disintegrated. The numerous Democratic and Social-Reform groups gathered strength—came to represent the real Italy of the peasant and tradesman—an Italy too ignorant to govern itself, too stodgy to trouble about efficiency, too egotistically shrewd to concern itself about the bureaucratic shrewdness of its pseudo-representatives, yet, withal, vigorous, elemental, in the narrow circle of daily affairs. This Italy was never able, except partially, to make use of the historic traditions of the Liberal party or the liberal elements that supplanted that party. Liberalism and the liberal state have been increasingly dominated by

the large bourgeoisie and the landed proprietors. These, where they could not browbeat and rule by the Camorra and election fraud, have, when times became too menacing, as during the bloody riots of Milan in 1898, granted socialistic reform of a truly paternalistic nature.

Thus the state in 1904 lapped up the railroads —at best a venture of dubious profit in a country of such mountainous topography, without mineral resources, and with a long coast-line adapted to water transportation. And the state assumed control of the telegraph lines and the telephones. It enacted social legislation which was enforced everywhere except in the factories, where it interfered with profits. This bureaucratic paternalism, tolerated by the Liberal party and the embodied ideal of the various constitutional groups and of pre-war Socialism, reached out its parasitic tentacles in all directions, folding them about every social activity, multiplying petty and annoying taxes and interferences, increasing inefficiency and graft with each new office created, stifling initiative in every manner. Few individuals of the middle classes in Italy do not hold down one or more governmental sinecures. Every fifth man wears some sort of official *berretta*.

This top-heavy paternalism all but collapsed during the war; it effectively demonstrated its incapacity for running any vast undertaking. If the true history of Italy's war-time participation is ever written, it will stand as the most damning indictment of odious governmental crassness and inefficiency in the countries that participated. The men in the trenches, dressed in shoddy and in paper shoes, improperly fed and provided for, often holding rifles that would not shoot, using ammunition that was frequently worthless and dangerous, knew this, knew the superficial facts of a conscription system vitiated by favoritism and bribery.

And this Government, as has been pointed out, proved itself equally incapable of dealing with the menacing problems of the post-war. The decrepit bureaucracy handed over governmental privileges to every graftor and every parasitical claimant. True, if it befriended the Lombard industrialists and the Genoese shipping interests on the one hand, it subsidized Socialist coöperatives and labor-unions on the other, both in an equally pernicious fashion. It tried to cater to every factional party. And yet it proved itself quite unable to maintain order. The wisdom of Giolitti's restraint at the time of the

factory seizures is history, but he had no other alternative. He, a mild-mannered, tolerant, clever man with more vision than the ordinary politician, was helplessly enmeshed by the bureaucracy which for twenty years he, more than any other individual in Italy, was responsible for creating.

The seeds of revolution were scattered abroad in class-ruled Europe and Italy long before the war. But the war, and post-war inefficiency and unsettlement, fed the flames. All intelligence and capacity for dealing with the abnormal situation seemed to have evaporated. Factions multiplied, formed, and reformed. The post-war Chamber of Deputies became a jarring den of bitter cliques. Giolitti shuffled these antagonistic elements like a crafty gambler with a spurious deck of cards. But the terrible ordeal of the years from 1918 to 1920 swept the chamber out of the orbit of Giolitti's control; the various groups became too bitter, too selfish, too kaleidoscopic to be governed. The typical self-seekers hurried into one camp and out, like the dead leaves of a lost season rustling before the growing wind of unrest whipping up from the distracted country. Their one frantic desire was to be on the winning side. Coalition Govern-

ment trod on the heels of coalition Government. A strong man could not rule such a neurasthenic assemblage. Weak men filled the breach by making concessions to everybody. The country was ruled by capricious ministerial decrees, because no minister remained in office long enough to force the necessary legislation through; and the Chamber was too disorganized to give its attention to constructive measures. The Fascisti blamed the situation on the proportional system. But according to Don Sturzo, leader of the Popular party, Italy had had sixty-eight different cabinets in seventy-two years. The post-war situation was but a culmination, an aggravation of half a century of failure in representative government. Under any system the bitter differences of the post-war would have shaken governmental stability.

If revolution and the breakdown of representative government was one aspect of civil life, Fascist violence was a challenge. The bureaucracy sought to cater to the Fascisti as it had catered to the Socialists before them. But the Fascisti refused to be bribed, refused to collaborate, either with the Socialists or the old bureaucrats. They have been consistently opposed to governmental favoritism and partizan patronage

and to the bureaucratic system that tolerated it.

Fascism, whatever else it may be or may since have become, is a belated revolt of the trenches against the Italian bureaucracy. The old bureaucracy, for its own cynical purposes, took over the Nationalist patriotic slogans. It attempted to give Irredentism a more vital meaning among the people. It talked a great deal of Italy a Mediterranean power, Italy a strong modern nation fit to fight by the side of England and France. "We," said the pudgy-handed ones of the war offices and the governmental sinecures, patting their gold-chained breasts, "we are fighting a war for liberty, the liberty of Italy in the world, the release of Italy from its traditional abject position, its traditional poverty, dirt, disease, and misery."

The men who went into the trenches believed these things, believed them ardently. What was hypocritically taught them, they accepted as gospel. Hypocrisy edged its own weapons against itself. The Fascisti took the stock patriotic, flag-waving symbols and breathed a content into them—a content that had never existed since Garibaldi swept with his Red-Shirts like a flashing meteor through Sicily and all the kingdom of Naples.

Fascism found in the existing Government its antithesis. It saw in official and political Italy an unrepentent coalition "of obstinate formalists, routine plodders, of cowardly bourgeoisie, cowering behind their privileges, their positions, their traditional bulwarks of lies and financial chicanery."

In his "*Fascismo nella Vita Italiana*" Pietro Gorgolino states the Fascist revolt against the old bureaucracy in this fashion:

Parliament . . . is composed of inept men who have no sensitiveness to the hurrying times, the rhythm of which is so difficult and the velocity of which is so much greater than before; men, in brief, who have . . . demonstrated themselves absolutely unequal to the tasks which the national will has assigned them. . . . The directing classes must give an account to-day of their misdeeds, and the majority of the Italians have a thousand and one reasons for being quite cruel in their judgment and bringing to a conclusion the general revolt of the nation against the oligarchic rulers of the state. . . .

Fascism has drawn up *tout court* against the class which is not only the political proprietor but also the economic proprietor of Italy, and seeks, therefore, to tear away its political privileges. . . . The state,

furthermore, gives aid to and receives aid from the bourgeois liberalism and conservatism. The strongest bourgeois interests intrench themselves in the economic activity . . . of the state. There are numerous and visible threads of contact and reciprocal aid between the dominating state and the bourgeoisie. It was a new social class, that which was born in the protecting shadow of the tricolor . . . at the time when Italy was created by the work of martyrs, prophets, and heroes; and beneath the auspices of that banner, bit by bit, it has planted itself, has taken strong root, become formidable—a new economic stratum that has made itself the pivot of our entire society; we speak of the liberal bourgeoisie. . . .

Against the bourgeois and conservative state that has created the monopolies and the capitalist wealth, Fascism rises compactly and battles for the transformation, within its own precincts and beneath its own ægis, of the state organism, in order to fill the state again . . . with industrious, popular, intelligent content. The state, actually decrepit, plethoric, and sterile from a blood-sucking, unintelligent bureaucracy, is thus refilled by the superior Fascist strength. . . .

With the new virility of Fascism, as with earlier proletarian revolt, the sedentary Giolittian bureaucracy had neither the intelligence, the ini-

tiative, nor the courage to cope. When the moral bankruptcy of the Socialist party was once patent (the Fascisti have had few morals to lose), Fascism, it was evident, could no longer be stayed, despite its amorphous and illogical character, from its victorious progress toward the capture of the state.

**PART IV**  
**THE MARCH ON ROME**



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BREAKER OF BALLOT-BOXES

OUT of the flux of Fascism and the post-war has emerged a masterful, driving personality. Benito Mussolini has attained his eminent position because of the volatile adaptability of his thought, coupled with his Calvinistic determination, his Cromwellian egoism. In a movement which was so fluid as to baffle analysis for fully two years, this energetic, rather dogmatic, yet imaginative leader became increasingly, as time went on, a rallying-point about which the emotional, popular tide might swirl.

Mussolini, Savior of our liberty,  
We Fascisti swear to you  
The highest eternal fidelity. . . .

So runs the chorus of the Fascist hymn to Benito Mussolini. The "savior" has yet to celebrate his fortieth birthday. He is the youngest man to head an Italian cabinet, twenty years

younger than d'Annunzio and forty years younger than Giolitti.

I first saw Mussolini in Bologna at the time when the struggle between the Socialist land leagues and agrarian Fascism was rising to its culminating point of bitterness, when the first *cbrporazioni* were springing into existence. In the Teatro Communale, he addressed about five thousand Fascisti, affirming a deep sentiment for every right of labor that should "prove consonant with national needs."

He spoke extemporaneously, with explosive energy. He does not flatter his audience but treats it aggressively, at times even abusively. He leaps to his conclusions more intuitively than logically. His mind sweeps from idea to idea often faster than his audience can follow, and he wins his hearers, not by his main conceptions, but by the felicitous and clever phrasing of distinct and apparently little-correlated points, often by the quick, sinuous turning of a sentence. He has absorbed a few philosophic tags from Sorel, Proudhon, Spinoza, and the Italian idealists, which he has the knack of expressing in the form of dilute, disconnected, and sweeping generalizations—frequently with a rather poetic originality. He has something of a poet's love for lan-

guage and for words, but is not so rhetorical as d'Annunzio. He has rather that peculiarly Latin appreciation for the sculpturing of thought and language, but he often lacks the power of synthesis, frequently blurs the main outlines. He is a phrase-maker.

All of his speaking gestures are compact, strong, yet incisive, and quite different from the dexterous, rather effeminate mannerisms of most Italian speakers. He is more economical with gestures, too, and uses rather the pose of his body and the intonation of his voice to force home his ideas. Perhaps his favorite posture is that of raising his left shoulder slightly and leaning forward with hands tense and close to the body. This accentuates his large semi-bald cranium and causes the whites of his eyes to gleam in an almost "darky" fashion. It is thus that he usually has his pictures taken, or else with his fists on his hips, elbows extended. The irises of his eyes are black as India ink. An Italian writer has said that Mussolini's glance is flashing, especially when he is deeply moved. I have never gained that impression, even when he was addressing an audience, nor a second time when I saw him, angered in a small group after a meeting. There is a veiled quality to his eyes, not a dreaming ex-

pression but the indefinable smoldering haziness that one may observe in the eyes of a person who has enjoyed some new and delicious emotional experience and is still slightly intoxicated, as though he were always a bit drunk with life.

The day after his arrival in Rome following his *coup d'état*, I waited for him to come out of the Hotel Savoy, up in the Ludovisi quarters of Rome. A rather amusing ceremony had to be gone through to get him to his automobile. The hotel entrance was guarded by Fascisti in their black shirts, with white gleaming skull and cross-bones and black helmets. First came a lackey with luggage, then, on the run, another lackey in plain clothes to open the door of the machine. This second lackey so resembled Mussolini that not a few of the group about the entrance began to cheer. I do not know whether the resemblance was quite accidental or whether, during those early days, a replica of the real Mussolini went ahead to receive any chance assassin's bullets—a sort of twentieth-century poison-taster. The real Mussolini, however, was announced by the blowing of a shrill trumpet, resembling more than anything else the tin horns used by the street-car employees at the traffic crossings in Rome.

The new "duke" of Italy walks with a queer, almost affected tread, a slow, deliberate, flat-footed walk, a sort of relentless stalking. This gives him a heavy-set appearance, although he is in reality of average build: This same impression of stockiness is imparted by the slow strong movement of his shoulders and the crouching forward thrust of his large, semi-bald skull.

As he stepped from the hotel entrance on that day, he seemed to have gathered an entirely new poise, a certain consciousness both of his own importance and the gravity of his responsibility. But as he met two friends at his automobile this vanished; for a second he was the Mussolini of quick, good-natured, but imperious friendship, and the dynamic quality of his personality flashed forth. I had never noticed before how brown he was or how large his mouth, how sensuous the lips. His nose is bold and aquiline; there is a certain massiveness to his features.

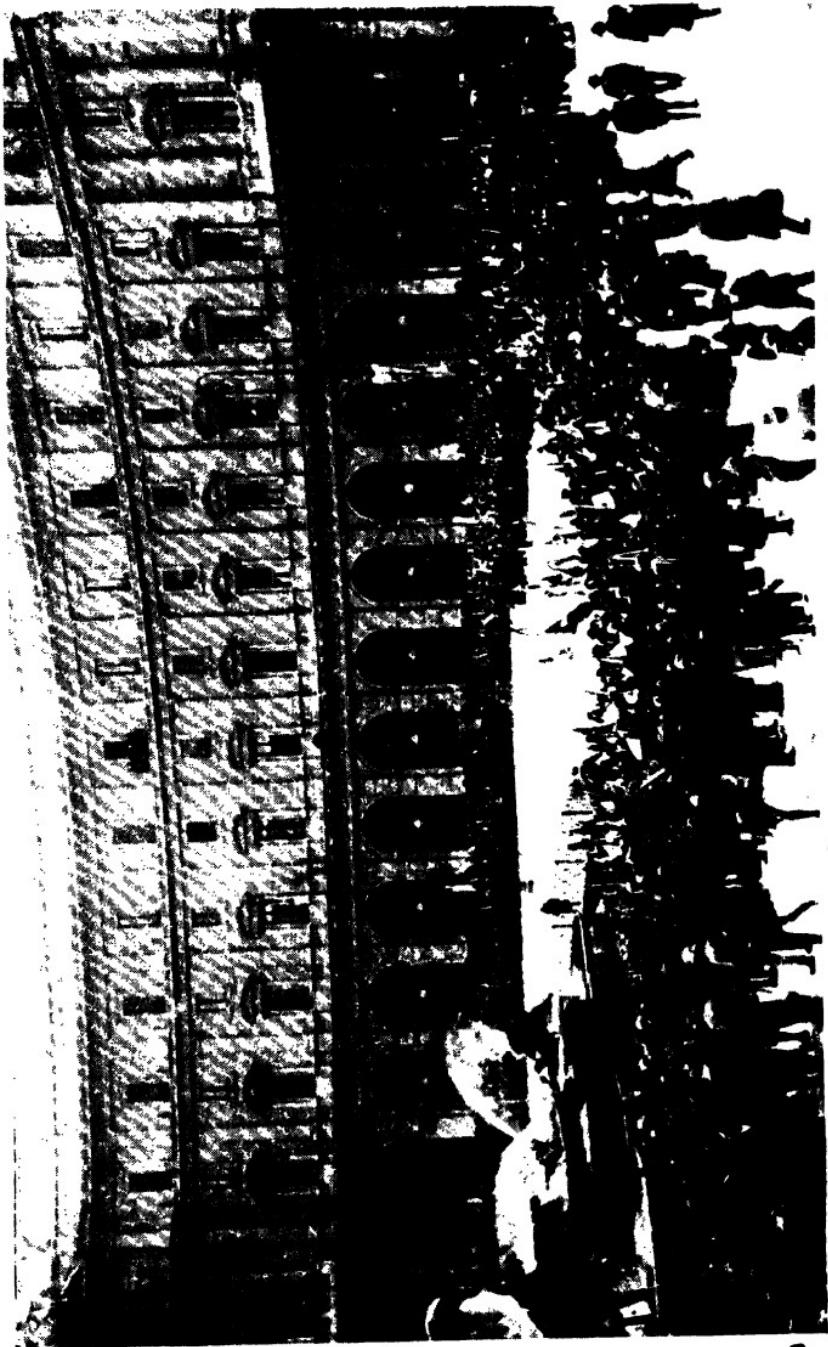
He was born in the small village of Predappio in a fold of the Apennines near Forli. A slight climb to a near-by ridge discloses the wide plain that stretches away to the Adriatic, with its not distant ports of Ravenna, where is the tomb of Dante, and Rimini, famed for its legend of

Paola and Francesca. He began his career as a teacher in an elementary school, but, becoming imbued with socialistic doctrines, interested himself in politics. He ran as a candidate for a local office against a man of relative wealth and influence but unscrupulous talents. Just what measures his opponent resorted to have not come to light, but Mussolini, convinced of the unfairness of the election, impetuously smashed the ballot-box.

The act is typical of his hasty, decisive temperament. He broke the ballot-box at the outset of his career; and he has broken the ballot-boxes of all Italy by his dictatorship.

On the earlier occasion, he was found guilty in a local court and went into voluntary exile in Switzerland, where he struggled against the most bitter poverty, for a time working as a bricklayer. (On the second occasion . . .) Then he met Giacomo Maneotto Serrati, who is still the leader of the intransigent wing of the Italian Socialist party and one of the shining lights of the Third International; and with a small group of radicals they continued their propaganda.

Mussolini soon proved too obstreperous for the Helvetian Government, which pronounced



The Rome convention of the Fascisti in November, 1921



him an anarchist and an "undesirable guest." Singularly enough, only his accession to power removed the legal bar against his reentering Switzerland. He next wandered through France, then located for a time in the Trentino, where he edited the "Avenite" and later managed the "Popolo," edited by the famous irredentist Cesare Battisti. He also, at that time, wrote a book which showed his first tendency to liberate himself from hard and fast doctrinaire beliefs, but which was sufficiently orthodox to give him a wide reputation among the Socialists.

Returning to Italy, he attended the Socialist convention at Ancona, where he engaged in a debate with Signor Bissolati, that hero of Italian Irredentism, over the question of freemasonry. Mussolini's attitude, that religious questions lay outside the sphere of a political party, won for him, at the age of twenty-five, the editorship of the "Avanti."

His writings at that time show a passion for direct action, an intense appreciation for ends rather than means—an attitude which has never deserted him. He is the type that believes in cutting Gordian knots at one blow, with no attempt at unraveling. In fact, he himself calls

his recent *coup* "a cutting of many Gordian knots."

In 1914 Mussolini opposed the anti-war stand of the Socialist party and, after a trial in which he insisted that the betrayal of the Socialist International by the German party had obligated the Socialists in every country to support a war against the Central Empires, was expelled on November 25.

He immediately founded the daily paper, "Il Popolo d'Italia," to voice his pro-war views. When Italy finally entered the conflict, he enlisted as a private in the *bersaglieri*, became a corporal, and later conducted a sort of trench paper. Then he was wounded so seriously that the physicians for a time despaired of his life.

When peace came, he resumed his editorship of "Il Popolo" and, in 1919, commenced his propaganda for the organization of the *Fasci di Combattimento*, of which he soon became the recognized head. Subsequently he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies.

His post-war leadership has been consistently oriented toward nationalism but otherwise has been experimental rather than arbitrary. On occasions it has been featured by a bitterness that is perhaps reminiscent of the difficulties of his

exile in Switzerland; at other times it has been featured by a far-sighted restraint, an attempt to curb the too noisy demonstrations of his own party. He has always advocated a *senso del limite*, an appreciation of bounds. As head of the Fascisti, he has committed the usual and perhaps necessary inconsistencies of every leader. He has praised the Vatican in Parliament as the fountainhead of the "universal idea that is the heritage of Rome"; but at the time of the attacks of the Fascisti upon the Catholics in Rome, Florence, and elsewhere, he made harsh onslaughts, if not upon the church, at least upon many of its priests and upon the Popular party. At one time he declared that Fascism was republican in tendency but that it would not risk revolution for fear of giving an opening to the Communist elements. But at the convention held in Naples he spoke in glowing terms of the institution of monarchy and has since discovered that it is easier to govern Italy with a king than without.

It is largely through his efforts that Fascism, instead of becoming entirely a peasant and middle-class movement, succeeded in absorbing a large part of the workers on a program of industrial coöperation and peace, of industry run

on behalf of national rather than partisan or class interests.

It was through his efforts that the Fascist movement was organized into a political party in the convention of November, 1921, in Rome. At that time d'Annunzio predicted the downfall of the movement, saying that Fascism represented a youthful spirit of direct action and achievement, that it could not be successfully compressed into grooves of parliamentarianism. Even earlier than this, following the elections of May, Mussolini had signed the truce with the Socialists which was denounced by the one hundred and fifty thousand agrarian Fascisti. Mussolini's reply was to resign; he intimated that he did not wish to belong to an organization not instilled with the most thoroughgoing spirit of discipline. The matter was patched up, but the pact was repulsed by a large vote at the subsequent Rome convention.

From this moment, while never completely abandoning the legal route, Mussolini is seen to swing with his party back toward a tactic of aggressive direct action. This tendency was especially pronounced during September and October of 1922, when the Fascist "squadrons"

were rounded out and placed upon a "minutemen" basis.

In tactic he was reverting to his attitude when he occupied the editorial chair of the "Avanti." He unreservedly adopted the theoretical principles of the first and most important leader of the Nationalist movement, Enrico Corradini, who cleverly uses the Socialist formulæ to buttress up the claims of Nationalism. In October, 1922, at the Naples convention of the Fascist party, Mussolini boldly abandoned the old tenets of democracy. There is little doubt that throughout he has been fully conversant with the syndicalist doctrines of violence, direct action, and dictatorship.

In 1912, two years before the World War, Georges Sorel, creator of the syndicalist theory of direct action, stated, according to the "Giornale di Roma":

Our Mussolini is not an ordinary Socialist. Believe me, you will see him some day, perhaps, at the head of a sacred battalion, saluting with the sword the Italian flag. He is an Italian of the fifteenth century, a *condottiero*.

Mussolini's pronouncements and orders dur-

ing the three October days during which the fate of Italy was being decided show a studied understanding of such doctrines and a relentless determination to exercise a dictatorship by means of the Fascist squadrons, should the constitutional elements fail to give way before the Fascist revolution.

Thus, as a result of the Socialistic struggles before the war, of exile, of the war itself, of the post-war turmoil, Mussolini has stepped forth, a commanding, if somewhat blatant, personality. He has carved out his life with swift bold strokes. There is something of the quick relentless passion and braggadocio of Benvenuto Cellini in him. And to Mussolini might seemingly be applied the words of the pope of Cellini's day spoken to a critic of the sculptor: "I must inform you, sir, that men like Benvenuto Cellini, unique in their profession, are not bound by the laws."

Like Cellini, like Andrew Jackson, Mussolini has ever been ready to annihilate his opponents bodily, and, during the time I was in Italy, fought at least two duels. He used to fight them more frequently.

Mussolini's weakness lies in his lack of phlegm, his impulsiveness, his uncontrollable

hot-headedness; his strength is in his lightning-quick adaptability, his utter freedom from formulæ, the swiftness with which he can strike. Men with iron unshakable principles have their place in the world; as well as those whose beliefs remain Machiavellian, experimental, fluid, ever *werdend*, as Goethe would have said. To the later belongs Mussolini, and perhaps it is only this type which has an iota of chance of survival in chaotic Europe. With his mercurial temperament, he unites enthusiasm, imagination, intellectual nimbleness—not so much a profound as a quick, flash-light grasp of situations and ideas. A driving, insatiable Rooseveltian hero.

## CHAPTER XVII

### GROWING TENSION

THE first half of August, 1922 (when occurred the hastily called general strike which was to usher in a Socialist-Popularist-Democratic cabinet) marks a great turning-point in the Fascist fortunes. That strike aroused the Fascisti to exasperated and decisive action. They served notice on the labor leaders to call off the strike within forty-eight hours; they seized the communal governments of Milan and Genoa, plunged Ancona into a reign of terror, and menaced the stability of the state itself. From that time on the Black-Shirts threw aside all pretense. Militant activities became more open and disregardful of constituted authority. The March on Rome loomed up as an imminent physical possibility.

On August 15 Senator Tomassia took up the cudgels for Fascism in the Senate. His speech was a clarification and a warning. He declared that Fascism "is not, was not, and never will be

. . . against the so-called conquest by the proletariat." He admitted that "socialist propaganda had been inevitable; that Karl Marx did not invent the dogma of the future of the proletariat," but insisted that the Socialist movement in Italy was lacking in all patriotism. Similarly, he said, the general corruption of the state was being hastened by the neo-Guelphism of the Popular party. But the country could not be allowed to perish at the hands of these forces; indeed, "it has been saved again by the valor of its youth." Fascism he defined as a reaction against the disintegration of the state.

On the same day, Signor Settimelli in his Rome paper, "Principe," wrote under the title "A Fascist Coup d'Etat?":

The pacificatory duty of the Monarchical Association is to place before the Italian intelligence the superiority of the monarchical idea. . . . Our association, if morally and materially upheld, can be *a great bridge* for the fusion of the old with the new state. . . .

But if the old liberal state will not know how to realize this fusion its doom is signed. It will be as a sick man, dying from feebleness who—although having at his side the choicest and most abundant food—no longer has the force to masticate and digest it.

Thereupon the "Fascist *coup d'état*," which would

certainly be respectful of the monarchy, would inevitably ensue.

About the same time, Signor Cicotti, a prominent journalist, in view of the difficulty of securing a stable cabinet, proposed the establishment of a temporary dictatorship on ancient Roman lines, a proposal which aroused prolonged controversy in the press. Directly afterward, on August 26, Mussolini at a Fascist convention in Levanto declared that Fascism intended to govern Italy, saying:

They demand of me a program. Well, our program is simple: we intend to govern Italy. If the Government does not have soiled hands, it will not impede us by closing the legal doors; otherwise, when the tocsin sounds the Fascisti will rise as one man for the ultimate and decisive battle, whose effective goal is Rome.

But not Rome, the ancient city, with its narrow streets, its curiosities: we desire to occupy the ministries; we speak of Rome, the capital of the nation, which should become the lighthouse of the Mediterranean, which should be guided by us to the vanguard of the civilized nations for the greatness and the prosperity of Italy, for the peace of Europe.

The Fascist activities were everywhere speeded up. Other local conventions were held,

two of the most important being that of the provinces of Verona and of Abruzzi and Molise held in the town of Pescara, the birthplace of d'Annunzio. At the same time, in spite of Mussolini's compunctions about legality, a drive was made upon most of the remaining Socialist and radical communes whose officials had not yet been frightened into resigning. Before the end of August the Socialist officials in virtually all the communes in the *circondario* of Lodi had been obliged to desert their posts, including those of Paullo, Borghetto Lodigiano, Brembio, Zorlesco, Secugnano, Ossago, Cornegliano. In the Biellesi the municipal officials of the administrations of Biella, Miaglano, Mottagliata, Trivero, Cossato, Masserano, Ochieppo Inferiore, Salussola, Coggiola, were forced out by Fascist threats or violence. On September 2, the administration of Chiaravalle, "under Fascist pressure," gave their resignations to the prefect. At Borgo Garibaldi near Terni, during the first days of September, the street-car union hall and the Socialist circle were attacked; at Stroncone, the coöperative and Socialist circles were devastated; the consumers' coöperative of Campicciola was forced to aline itself with the Fascisti; the administration of Arrone was terrorized into re-

signing. The Fascisti again invaded Acona, where seventeen buildings were devastated by fire or bombs, and a lawless terror maintained for days. On September 6 the elected officials of the province of Novara and of all the communes were obliged to resign. Toward the middle of the month in Monterotondo the administrators of the Agrarian University and of the commune were forced out—the only remaining legally elected officials of the province. On the eighteenth, after repeated demands that the municipal officials of Alassio (near Savona) resign, the Fascisti occupied the city hall. On the twenty-sixth all the Fascisti of Tuscany were mobilized by Marquis Dino Perrone Compagni, commander of the district, because of the arrest of the Fascist secretary of Pescia.

All through the Lazio, Socialist and Catholic communal officials were driven from their offices and their homes. On October 4, two hundred Fascisti armed with rifles and castor-oil descended upon Rocca di Papa, a Catholic center, where they occupied the municipal offices and demanded the resignation of the Popular officials within twenty-four hours but were finally driven off by the Royal Guards. On October 18 the Fascisti invaded Viterbo and destroyed the rail-

way workers' coöperative and the Casa del Popolo. These are but a few of the many similar occurrences which took place from August up to the time of the Fascist *coup* at the end of October.

The Fascisti were building up their organized strength. On the one hand, they were "purg-*ing*" the party of undesirable or equivocal elements, as at Parma, where the Fascio, long known for its radical tendencies, was dissolved and a new picked organization created. On September 1, Cesare Rossi, the political secretary, announced the formation of the Corpo di Polizia Fascista in Milan to "purify" the Fascist ranks by eliminating all half-hearted elements, announcing: "the Milan Fascio intends rigorously to protect the dignity of all its members, who are sometimes compromised by acts of real banditry performed by suspected criminal outcasts on the margin of our vigorous bold militia."

On the other hand, particular attention was given to increasing the membership of the *corporazioni*. The defeat of the general strike of August had caused a hurried shift of hundreds of labor syndicates into the Fascist ranks. On September 3 was held the first national congress of marine workers. Above all, special attention

was given to rounding out the Fascist membership in southern Italy, the Mezzogiorno. On September 7, a Congress was held under the auspices of the National Fascist party to consider the pressing problems of the south and the islands. It was then announced that, in spite of the earlier hostility to Fascism in these regions, there now existed about four hundred local "bands." A general plan for furthering organization was mapped out, and a comprehensive scheme of financial and economic reform proclaimed. Particular emphasis was laid upon the "*sgretolamento dei feudi* which were created merely to serve private interests and pernicious power." The Fascisti should, on the contrary, through thus breaking up the feudal estates, "create in all the provinces of the Mezzogiorno a producing and laboring bourgeoisie similar to that in northern and central Italy."

Beginning with October, the relations between Fascism and the Government became more strained. On October 8, Mussolini demanded Fascist control of the cabinet or revision of the electoral law and the prompt subsequent calling of new elections. Premier Facta half agreed to arrange for the holding of

new elections, promising to reassemble the Chamber for that purpose. But on the eighth he stated that he could not heed the Fascist ultimatum. "The Government will remain at its post. The greatest injustice that could be done to me would be that of believing I have thought for a single moment of abandoning my position and the responsibility imposed upon me. Only the Chamber has a right to tell me that the relinquishment of my position is necessary." At the same time Facta denied any intention of taking exceptional coercive steps against the Fascisti. As a matter of fact, he was so alarmed that on the afternoon of the eighth he sacrificed the dignity of his position by calling at the Hotel London to see Michele Bianchi, the new general secretary of the Fascist party. Bianchi laid the Black-Shirt demand once more before the premier:

For the Fascisti, the existing Chamber no longer represents the country, and, therefore, in one manner or another, should be superseded in the shortest time possible. Whether the Chamber is reconvened or not, elections should be immediately convoked, even if, because of lack of necessary time to reform the existing

law, the new assembly should be elected with the proportional system. . . .

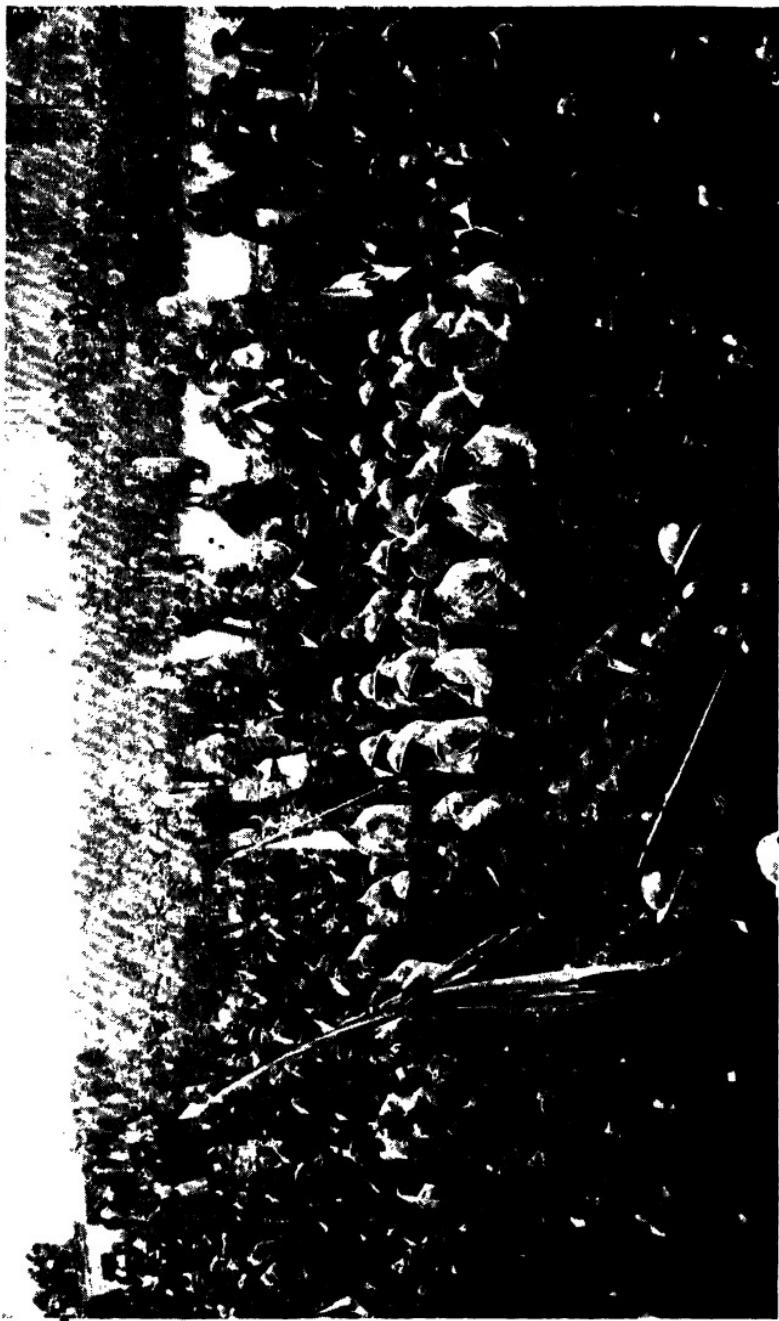
He went on to say that if the Chamber should be reopened and should attempt some new political combination, the "Fascisti would desert the assemblage and convoke the people in the piazzas [*convocherebbero il popolo in piazza*]."

On October 14 in the "Popolo d'Italia" Mussolini openly attacked General Badoglio of the War Department in an editorial entitled "Army and Fascism":

At a reunion held in Rome between a number of bourgeoisie—bourgeoisie of journalism, bourgeoisie of finance, bourgeoisie of politics; those bourgeoisie, in short, who have many reasons to hate Fascism because Fascism proposes to eliminate them and will eliminate them—was also in attendance General Badoglio. General Badoglio expressed himself in this fashion: "At the first fire, all of Fascism will collapse." . . .

General Badoglio fools himself. Already the Fascisti have been fired upon. At Sarzana fourteen fell; at Modena, eight. To-day in the zone of Sarzana Fascism is so strongly "ensquadroned" that it disposes of regular cavalry units [photographs were shown on the same page] . . . We believe that the turbid proposal of General Badoglio will never have any realization. The national army will not go against the army

Installing a new Fascio in a small village





of the Black-Shirts for the simple reason that the Fascisti will never go against the national army, for which it has the highest respect and infinite admiration.

Concurrently the halls of Montecitorio and of the National Council of Ministers buzzed with the efforts to form a new cabinet which would appease the Fascisti. Facta no longer counted. Conferences were held between de Nicola, president of the Chamber, and Grandi (acting parliamentary leader for the Fascisti), with Salandra, Orlando, and Giolitti, who was in retirement at his village of Cavour.

Settimelli in the "Patria" for the fifteenth announced: "The supreme hour of Fascism is about to strike. . . . The militia is perfectly organized; the economic units close up their files to conserve the hierachal spirit. . . . The Government has to be exclusively Fascist. . . ."

On the seventeenth the legions of the Sempre Pronti, the Blue-Shirt Nationalists, were reviewed by the king. . . . Pacts were everywhere entered into between the Nationalists and the Fascisti. In the province of Pisa it was agreed to:

1. Discountenance all isolated conflicts that might occur between Nationalists and Fascisti.

2. Settle by the common accord of the federal executive organs of the two organizations every equivocal happening or divergence of ideas which might endanger the liberty of propaganda and the discipline of the two movements.

3. Refuse to accept from each other's ranks those expelled for unworthiness and to discuss amicably between the two parties the acceptance of members previously expelled for minor infringements.

Meanwhile, Facta set the date for the reopening of Parliament on October 28, and once more excited efforts were made to form a compromise cabinet. Various names for the premiership were suggested: Orlando, de Nicola, Giolitti, Salandra. The Fascisti, however, refused to modify their ultimatum demanding full control of the Government. Again the reopening of the Chamber was postponed, till November 7.

A howl went up from the Fascist camp, but the Government continued to procrastinate, to suggest difficulties, to intrigue, to offer the Fascisti minor positions. The Fascisti remained stubborn. Their temper grew more taut. Government and Fascisti had reached a granite-walled impasse.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MILITARY HIERARCHY

AT Torre Pellice on September 17, 1922, was signed by the Fascist party executive committee and the general command the document which perfected the military organization of the Black-Shirt squadrons. This document, published in "La Patria" for October 8, was known as the "Disciplinary Regulations for the Fascist Militia."

The candidate for the Fascist militia is required to swear that

In the name of God and Italy, in the name of all those who have fallen in battle for the greatness of the *patria*, I swear to consecrate myself exclusively and unceasingly for Italy's good.

The Fascist "military uniform symbolizes the process of infusing a new masculine vigor into the country and the laying of the foundations for a strongly efficient hierarchy to which the

party will eventually distrust the destinies of the nation."

The Fascist militia is required to serve Italy "in purity, with a spirit imbued with deep mysticism"; the Fascist soldier "knows only duty," and, whether officer or private, is required to "obey with humility and command with force." Obedience is to be "blind, absolute, and respectful." The Fascist soldier has a law of his own, "the law of honor, as had the knights of old."

The Fascist militia rejects "those who are impure, those who are unworthy, and those who are traitors." A member, however obedient, is considered "impure" who lacks the real spirit of Fascism, "who lacks the sense to meet the enemies of Italy on the basis of a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, a fire for a fire, a wound for a wound, or a bruise for a bruise; he who has any lack of faith whatsoever, any skepticism, or the least hesitation when military action is under way."

That member is "unworthy" who resists discipline or refuses to recognize the hierarchy; who lacks honor, courage, or a spirit of solidarity.

That member is a "traitor" who "spreads distrust of the leaders," who "incites movements of

rebellion within a squadron, among squadrons, among maniples, centuries, cohorts, or legions"; who starts a counter-organization, abuses the Fascist militia after having withdrawn from it, or in any way fails to live up to the oath.

Those charged with impurity, unworthiness, or treachery shall be tried by the proper tribunals and, if found impure, shall receive penalties ranging up to expulsion; those found unworthy shall be expelled; "the traitors in addition to expulsion shall suffer the severest punishments."

The militia is made up of "princes" or "Black-Shirts" and of *triari* or reserves, as in the Roman militia. The first group (princes or Black-Shirts) comprises the most active and ardent fighters. The *triari* make up the reserves "who stand by the shoulders of the fighters," and are composed of older men and those who, because of special circumstances, are not a part of the regular force. However, the *triari* are not exempt from the military regulations of the hierarchy. The princes are entitled to wear the uniform; the *triari* must not do so except by order of the general command.

The hierarchy of the Fascist militia is both military and political; but the leaders of either division bear the most serious responsibility.

"He who would build<sup>o</sup> to-day the hierarchy of the Italy of to-morrow must possess the temper of a feudal lord, the will of a ruler, the personal charm and magnetism of an apostle, and a heart as great as Italy. . . . Above faith, strength, passion, and arms, he must be a master of sacrifice." The leader must teach by example, but "he has the right and the duty to use force toward those below him." He must demand the strictest discipline; he must not shun responsibility. In case of any failure to fight, any delinquency, any remission of duty, the responsibility rests on the leaders because "the whole membership of Fascism and the whole future of Italy are based on the hierarchy." The hierarchy is formed from those who merit promotion and those who gave proof of sacrifices during the Great War and the war against the internal enemy; the leaders are chosen and assigned to the Fascist militia by superior officials in accord with the political authorities of the party. All the leaders of the militia "are military leaders"; and during action or military demonstrations the civil leaders have no authority.

"The hierarchical scale is as follows: *Military rank*: general commanders, general zone inspectors, consuls, cohort commanders, century com-

manders, manipulate commanders. *Corresponding political rank:* party leaders, general political secretary, members of the party executive committee, vice-general secretaries, general administrative secretary, regional delegates, deputies."

The uniform is worthy of every respect, and its principle feature is the black shirt, reminiscent of the Garibaldian red shirt. The uniform "now has its own glory and its own history." Every wearer of the black shirt must ever assume a "correct and noble bearing." Abuse of the uniform is not permitted, and he who "does not defend the uniform and emblems at the cost of his life is unworthy of wearing them. The uniform perpetuates the traditions of the war heroes." It must be worn "with pride and love."

The regulations also provide for the character and scope of public demonstrations. No demonstration of the militia can be made without previous agreement between the political and military authorities. (The closest bonds are at all times to be maintained between the two elements.) In every demonstration the leader is required to oblige his underlings to comport themselves so as to cause every citizen to feel that the Fascist militia is the first guard of the nation; and "whenever the Black-Shirts appear

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in public they must prove that they are the purest and the highest patriotic forces in Italy." On the other hand, every disorder, "every demonstration of a demagogical nature, or in defense of private interests, shall be considered treason and shall be punished as such, either collectively or individually."

An extensive section is devoted to "Rewards and Emblems of Honor." Fascisti who have distinguished themselves by "deeds of courage performed in purity" shall receive the medal for Fascist courage or promotion, which may be of gold, silver, or bronze, and is tied with a vermillion ribbon having two tricolor borders. These medals can only be awarded by a majority vote of the triumvirate of the general command, after the proposal of award shall have been passed favorably by every grade of subordinate officer. The medal awards will then be published in the bulletin of the general command and reprinted in all the orders of the day "so that they can be read by all the princes." Promotions to the head of a squadron or head of a maniple may be made only by legion commanders or their superiors. Promotion to century commander may be made by the zone inspectors. Promotion to cohort commander or



Black-Shirt cavalry



Photo by Romolo

also entering Rome



higher rank is always decided by the general command. Fascisti wounded in action are entitled to a special wound emblem, which is a stripe of vermillion braid worn obliquely across the right sleeve of the black shirt.

These regulations were signed by Cesare Maria de Vecchi, Emilio de Bono, Italo Balbo; and Michele Bianchi, who later composed the quadrivirate at the time of the March on Rome.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE NAPLES CONVENTION

**I**T rained in Naples on October 24 when the Fascisti swept into their second annual political convention in the Sala Maddaloni with their helmets and canes, their tricolors and their black banners. Nature repeats herself; man imagines he does not. Wrote Signora Pozzi on the occasion of her visit to Naples in 1785, "Thunder, lightning, storm at sea, rain and wind contending for mastery and combining to extinguish the torches . . . ; Vesuvius vomiting fire and pouring torrents of red-hot lava down its sides. . . ."

For "Vesuvius" substitute "Fascist convention," and the parallel holds, save that the actual eruption was not yet. Vesuvius was smoking. And all Italy knew that it would erupt in some manner sooner or later. The tense days at Naples put the emphasis upon "sooner."

"Fascisti, a Napoli ci piove. Che ci state a fare?"—"Fascisti, it rains at Naples. What is

there to be done?" demanded Michele Bianchi, the general secretary, with ironic significance touching the chord of an old Italian proverb: "It rains, curses on the government."—"Piove, Governo ladro."

And he added: "To-day the greatest weight in the political balance and in the Italian nation is given by us Fascisti. The present situation should render us proud. . . . A few days back we were excited and exultant, but, O signors, there has come into your souls and into my soul, these past twenty-four hours, a great exaltation that has given birth to a definite and determined purpose which will and should be victorious. How shall we achieve this victory? It is not my business to discuss the means in full convention, and it is as little necessary to convoke a secret committee. . . . It is sufficient to observe in order to understand, and I believe we understand each other perfectly."

Said Benito Mussolini, "We are at the moment when the arrow parts from the bow or the cord breaks."

Said Louis XIV long ago, "I am the state."

Said the Fascisti in convention: "We are the state. We alone represent the real Italy:

Italy, the nation . . . the new Italy, the fourth Rome . . . Italy supreme in the Mediterranean."

The Naples convention was not so much a convention as a mobilization. Following the publication of the Fascist militia regulations in September, an increasing ferment was observable in the Fascist camp. Vigorous attempts were made to round out the Fascist militia units in all parts of the country, especially in the south. A *rapprochement* was made with the Blue-Shirt Nationalists, the militant Sempre Pronti. In accordance with Articles 36 and 37 of the "Regulations for the Discipline of the Fascist Militia," Italy was divided into twelve zones, the eleventh and twelfth being Sicily and Sardinia, each of which was put under a zone commander of known military prominence. Calls were sent out for ex-soldiers; special appeals were made for volunteers for deficient branches of the service. I remember reading in "La Patria" an appeal for cooks. The Fascisti were not going to be without their broth whatever came. A supply department was built up. Red Cross brigades were created. Cavalry was organized, the platoons of Puglia and Certaldo being particularly celebrated.



Women Fascisti. Convention of Naples. This picture was taken in the rain



Especially significant were the activities in Tuscany, which was to be the key province for the later March on Rome. In Florence the Fascist forces were mobilized and reviewed by Michele Bianchi, de Bono, and other members of the Fascist general staff. A convention in that city, on the eve of departure for the Naples reunion, established on a firm basis the spirit and the means for military action. Throughout Italy, but especially in Tuscany, steps were taken during the latter part of October to make sure of all strategic points. Thus a correspondent for the "Popolo d'Italia" wrote of the preparations in Valdesa, a valley lying midway between Siena and Florence:

Ponte a Elsa, a strategic point, the knot of the highways between the Arno basin and our valley—secure; Granaiola, still uncertain; Monterappoli and Castelnuovo, well guarded by our forces; Castelfiorentino secure, along with Montespertoli, Montaione, Gambassi, Le Mura, San Vivaldo, and Varna, farm and charcoal towns, linked by life and death to the Fascist faith; Certaldo, a center guaranteed by the main citadels of Fiano, Marcialla, San Guadenzio, and San Martino; San Gemignano, well placed with Vico d'Elsa, weak but well surrounded and easily seizable for any necessity; all the valley is in our possession, excellent position be-

tween the Sienese and Florentine regions ready for any eventuality.

Thus was built up during the month a military state within the state. But the great national review of the Fascist forces took place at Naples. On the morning of the twenty-fourth Mussolini addressed the convention in the jammed theater of San Carlo. The interior was draped with bold eighteenth-century liberty banners and the yellow and red communal emblems reminiscent of the rule of the kings of Aragon and Castile and the tricolors and the black Fascist banners, a mélange of show and enthusiasm; and in the afternoon the Fascist princes and *triari* filed through the drizzling city.

At the head of the column rode the Fascist cavalry four abreast, uniformed and helmeted; these were followed by the bicycle squadrons, always of importance in a land where few streets and roads can be used by automobiles or motorcycles, and where telephone service is good for nothing. Next came Mussolini, the general staff, and the gold-medalists; then the legions, the advance-guard, the Balilla (Boy Scout) squadrons, the princes and the *triari*, all in uniform, helmeted, blankets and rations slung across

their backs. The members of the labor syndicates which followed seemed quite out of place in this otherwise militaristic display. Far more in keeping were the trucks and the sanitary corps, which closed the procession.

The very brevity of the convention proper had a sinister complexion. On the twenty-fifth three sessions were hurriedly held. The conclusions were insignificant—the intensification of the organization work in the Mezzogiorno and Sicily and the perfection of the discipline. The real labor of the convention was done secretly by the executive committee. The manner in which the delegates hurried away to their various home localities indicated that a definite decision had been reached for prompt and energetic action to remove the impasse between the Fascisti and the Government.

The real significance of the convention is to be found in the speech of Mussolini in the Teatro San Carlo, a speech which he declared was addressed, not to his own Fascisti, who needed no counsel, but to those outside the movement, and particularly to the Government. "We have come to Naples," he declared, "from every part of Italy to perform a rite of fraternity and love. We are here with the brothers of the betrayed

Dalmatian shore, who intend never to give up."

He then described the convention at Rome the previous year, which had met in an atmosphere of hostility, harassed by a general strike and violence, betrayed by the political machinations of the capital. He remarked that all Italy was watching the present convention, that the post-war held no such interesting and remarkable and powerful development as Fascism, that it seemed presumptuous to elaborate what he had already said in other addresses, but that in view of the extraordinarily grave situation in which the movement found itself, he intended to utilize the opportunity to speak with the utmost precision. "In short, we are at the point at which the arrow parts from the bow, or the cord, too tightly drawn, is broken." He pointed out that he had put before Parliament the dilemma: "Legality or illegality? Parliamentary conquest or insurrection? By what road shall Fascism become the state? When I demanded the elections, when I demanded them soon, when I demanded them subject to electoral reform, it was evident to all that I had chosen a path."

He went on to say that this demand was made also by a party organized in the most formidable

manner, which included the "entire new generation of Italy, all the most perfect youths of Italy"; that the demand followed on the heels of the violent Fascist anti-German incidents in Bolzano and Trent, "which revealed to all the paralysis of the Italian state, and, in contrast, the efficiency . . . of the Fascist state." The Government, he declared, was making a grave error in trying to raise a question of public security and order. Fascism has never minced words. "We have demanded that the state issue from its grotesque neutrality. . . . We have demanded the most stringent reform of finances, we have demanded a delay in the evacuation of the third Dalmatian zone [contrary to the Treaty of Rapallo], and we have demanded five governmental portfolios and control of the Aviation Commissariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of War, of Marine, of Labor, and of Public Works."

"What has been done? Nothing! . . ." The Fascisti, he stated, had been offered everything except that which they demanded. But the Fascisti do not intend "to renounce" their "formidable primogenial ideal for a miserable plate of ministerial lentils," but rather intended

to "thrust into the liberal state all the force of the new Italian generation that has issued from the war and the victory."

As this had not been achieved, the question had become one of force, "which in the end decides. . . . It is for this reason we have united and potently organized and rigidly disciplined our legions, because if the struggle must be decided upon the field of force, then the victory shall be ours. . . . The Italian people . . . have the right, have the duty of liberating their political and spiritual life from all the parasitic incrustations of the past; they can no longer perennially prolong the present state of affairs because it would murder the future."

Again he touched upon the efforts of the "administrators of Rome" to side-track the Fascisti, to pacify the movement, to call for loyalty to the king. He again (as he had done at Udine) wished to clarify the relations between king and Fascism, for "there is no doubt that the unitary régime of Italian life solidly upholds the Savoyard monarchy. And, on the other hand, that the monarchy, because of its history and its traditions, will not oppose the new national force"; nor will it oppose the movement that will "liberate it from all the superstructure that bur-

dens the historic position of this institution. . . .”

Parliament he characterized as a toy. He remarked that Fascism would not deprive the people of their toy; in fact, to attempt to do so, though only six million out of eleven million electors had put it into office, would raise a great hue and cry. But he took a direct stand against democracy. “We do not believe that after democracy will come the super-democracy. If democracy was useful and efficacious for the nation in the nineteenth century, it can be said that in the twentieth century there may be some other political form which will more surely strengthen the coherence of our national society. . . .”

Much of the burden rested upon the army. “The greatness of the nation is the complex of all its capacities, of all its conditions. A nation is great when it translates into reality the force of its spirit.” The army expressed the real spirit of Italy.

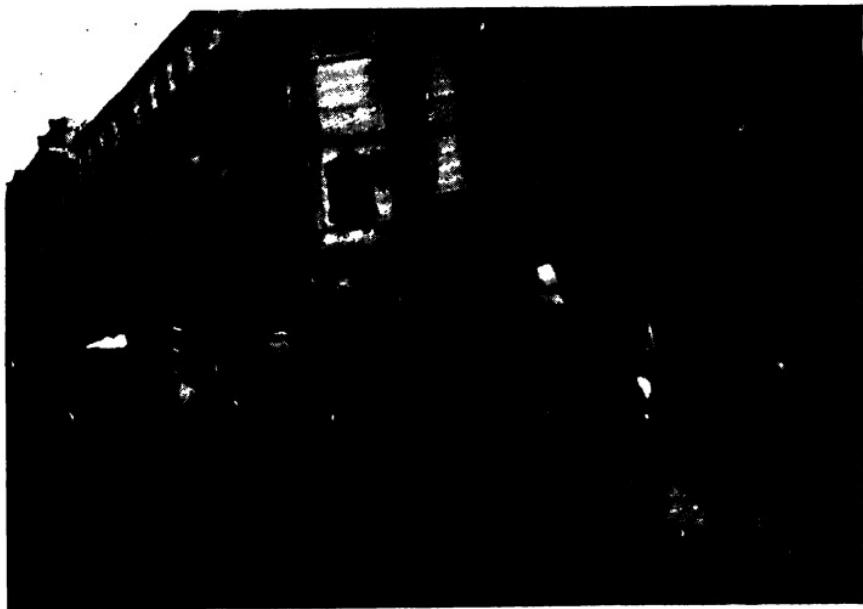
With regard to syndicalism, he declared that Fascism took no stock in the doctrine that the mass, in its entirety, in its inertia, could create anything enduring in history. “This mythology, at the bottom of the socialist literature, we repudiate. But the laboring masses exist in the

nation; they are necessary to the life of the nation in peace and in war. . . . Educate them we can and should; protect them in their just interests we can and should." He expressed his desire to end the civil war, to make a pact which would ensure lasting peace; "we wish all Italians to adopt the same common denominator which will render possible civil living together." With those who refuse to accept the Fascist common denominator of the nation there could be no peace except by Fascist victory.

He closed his address by stressing the importance of Italy in the Mediterranean. "I see the future greatness of Naples, the true metropolis of our Mediterranean (the Mediterranean to the Mediterranean peoples), and I see it together with Bari . . . and with Palermo constituting a potent triangle of force, of energy, of capacity; and I see Fascism uniting and coöordinating all this energy . . . beneath its banners."

Two days later began the March on Rome.





Fascisti from Siena, Rome, October 30.



Fascisti from Arezzo, Rome, October 31, 1922

## CHAPTER XX

### THE MARCH ON ROME

(Notes from my diary)

October 28.

**T**O-DAY Premier Facta tendered his resignation. The king, who had been blissfully swimming at Gombo (where Shelley was drowned) and getting his name in the papers in glowing accounts for saving a fisherman's boat at the mouth of the Arno River, has hurried to Rome—just in time to try to save the Ship of State foundering at the unruly mouth of storm-swollen events.

Signor Facta has been patted upon his pudgy back and told to do his best until the crisis is averted. His best has been to mass cavalry and machine-gun lorries in the Piazza della Pilotta, put out barbed-wire entanglements, and fling heavy guards at the city gates and the bridges over the Tiber. For the March on Rome has begun. "Rome or Death!" is the Fascist slogan.

What is really happening? . . . Even the Government is in the dark. The Fascisti have seized the telegraph lines and the post-offices; "the ganglia of the nation." The army authorities here in Rome have sent bicycle-scouts pedaling furiously over the country roads to find out where the great Black-Shirt army is encamped, and these have pedaled furiously back, sweating, to report a hundred exaggerated rumors. Last night there were a few press despatches telling of Fascist mobilization; this morning, no papers, no news—just excited crowds crammed into the piazzas.

During the morning hours, the Fascisti posted typewritten circulars on the down-town buildings, announcing the full success of the movement in Tuscany, and calling for mobilization of the Rome Black-Shirts at midday.

Tuscany is the key to the control of Italy. Not for nothing was General Diaz—how reminiscent of Mexican politics is the name—in Florence on the night of the twenty-seventh. Tuscany in Fascist hands and the Socialist north is cut off from the Giolittian south. The two enemies of Fascism are severed. Milan is Red, and in Milan things might not have gone smoothly. In Rome there are troops and

machine-guns and a tradition of order. In the south is reaction—apathy and poetry. But the Tuscan people are harsh, direct, and at the same time super-romantic—ideal revolutionists. Tuscany could be captured and held—everything had been prepared—and in taking it the Fascisti have broken the Italian stick across the knee at one stroke. And, with Tuscany as a base, with the lines of communication in their hands and the Apennines at their back, they can come south upon Rome; and the Government must realize this, or at least the king does, or at least is willing to believe so.

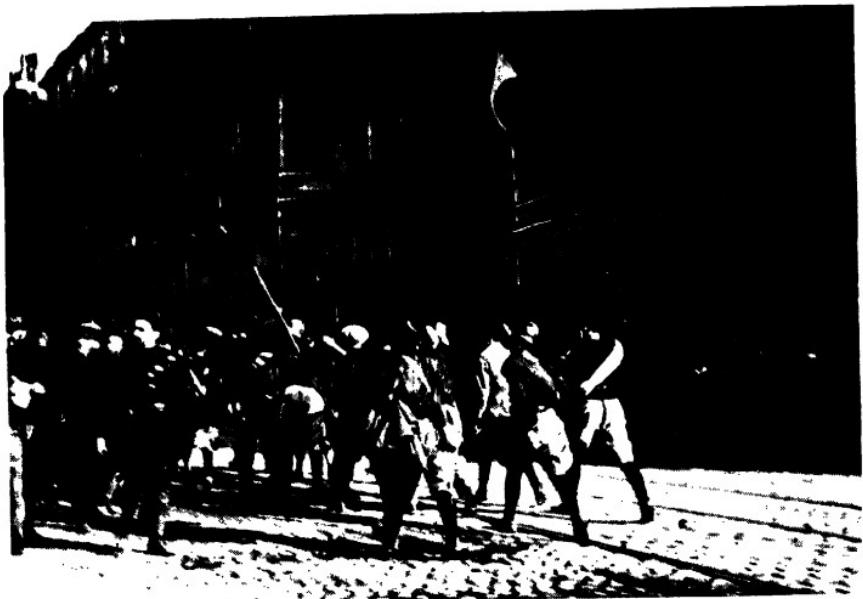
Even this morning a small group of Fascisti, without opposition from the Guardia Regia, took charge of the traffic on several prominent streets. Down Via Due Macelli and Corso Umberto I swept a motor-truck filled with Black-Shirts, calling out: "Up with the tricolor! Up with the tricolor!" Almost instantaneously the red, white, and green banners were flung free from the office windows.

From Milan has come the order of Fascist martial law, signed by "The Quadrivirate." (How the word echoes the long record of violence down the Italian centuries!)

The hour of decisive battle has sounded. Four years ago the national army on this same day launched the great offensive that led to victory. To-day the army of the Black-Shirts reaffirms the since-mutilated victory and, striking fiercely at Rome, returns that victory to the glory of the Campidoglio.

From to-day the princes and *triari* are mobilized. Fascist martial law enters into full force. At the command of the *duce*, the military, political, and administrative powers of the party control have been assumed by a secret acting Quadrivirate with dictatorial powers. The army, the supreme safeguard of the nation, should not participate in the struggle. Fascism renews its great admiration for the Army of the Victory of Venice. Not against the agents of the public force marches Fascism, but against the imbecile and deficient political class, which during four long years has not known how to give a government to the nation. The classes that compose the bourgeoisie know that the Fascisti intend only to impose discipline upon the nation and to aid all the forces which will augment economic expansion and well-being. The working-people, those of the fields and the offices, those of transportation and the professions, have nothing to fear from Fascist power. Their just rights will be loyally guarded. We shall be generous with the unarmed adversaries, inexorable with the others. Fascism draws its sword to cut the too numerous Gordian knots that insnare and burden Italian life.





Fascisti from Florenee and San Lorenzo, Rome, Via Tritone,  
October 31, 1922



Black-Shirts coming into Rome

We call upon supreme God and the spirit of our 500,000 dead to testify that one sole impulse inspires us, that one sole purpose unites us, that one sole passion burns in us—to contribute to the salvation and the greatness of the patria..

Fascisti of all Italy! Be Roman in spirit and strength. It is necessary to conquer. We shall conquer.

## THE QUADRIVIBRATE.

Facta and his ministers, twenty-four hours too late, if indeed not two months too late, have countered this with a decree of official martial law, declaring that "seditious manifestations have occurred in all parts of Italy" threatening "to throw the country into the greatest disorder." The Government has attempted all possible means of conciliation, but "in the face of insurrectional attempts" this, the resigned cabinet, has "the duty of maintaining public order by whatever means and at whatever cost."

But the king immediately repudiated the idea of martial law, saying that he was not disposed to sign any decree which he did not consider serious or opportune. Facta has been obliged to communicate the king's decision to the press.

In Rome, however, the order has already gone into effect. All assemblages of more than five

persons have been prohibited, street-car service has been stopped, all motor vehicles have been forbidden to circulate, all public spectacles are ordered withdrawn.

The Fascisti, armed with canes, table-legs from wrecked labor headquarters, burly tree-roots, have been coming into town on the dead run. At the news of the King's refusal to sign the martial law decree, they congregated—exultant at what they considered their first victory—before the royal palace on the Quirinal.

Twelve o'clock. The hour of mobilization. Rain. A steady drizzle, quickening to a down-pour. Not a sign of life. Only rain . . . rain driving against the century-old walls of *rustica* and travertin. And then the wind! Capricious gusts sweeping through the gap of the Tiber, past the Janiculum and the Campidoglio, across the broken columns of the sunken Forum.

Standing in the Piazza del Popolo, I cannot even see the great white, semicircular monument to Victor Emmanuel II—the Altare della Patria—at the end of the Corso. Above me in the Pincio, that hill-perched park where five centuries ago the greatest cardinal of the day came to drive out the evil spirits, the dripping trees

lift their branches fantastically against the gray rain-curtain, dim hobgoblin shapes. I take refuge in the dingy Caffè Europa opposite the flight of gray and pink steps leading to the park. I plump down on one of its threadbare upholstered wall-seats.

"Que scherzo! What a farce!" exclaims my long-nosed neighbor. "This will put the kibosh on everything."

I start out again, splashing through the puddles . . . toward the street-car tunnel beneath the Quirinal. At Via Tritone, I turn toward the Piazza Barberini and the Fascist headquarters. . . .

A few grumpy-eyed youths hang in the entrance with heavy cudgels and guns. . . . Things will happen, I am told. . . . Bound to happen. . . . Ancona has been occupied. . . . The ammunition works at Terni have been seized. . . . Twenty thousand Fascisti are camped five kilometers out on the Via Nomentano, with cannons and machine-guns. . . . Sixty thousand are coming south from Tuscany. . . .

I splash off. The rain and wind shake my umbrella, my coat . . . like a dog shaking a rug. Cold damp creeps up my legs. . . .

At the Royal Palace on the Quirinal—nothing . . . not even an extra guard. . . . The secretary of war slips into the courtyard in an enormous limousine . . . steps out leisurely.

At Montecitorio, where the Chamber of Deputies meets, two olive-gray uniforms, as on every other day in the year.

At the headquarters of the Supreme Council of State in the old Palazzo Spada alla Regola in a squalid quarter near the Tiber, not even a guard. Just a vacant vista through the giant portals and the stone courtyard to the rain-drenched gardens beyond. In the Piazza, a few smudgy bambini sailing straws between the cobblestones.

At the Ministry of the Interior, where the resigned cabinet is in constant session, two full companies of soldiers, soaking . . . shivering . . . hashed into a futuristic polychrome by the lines of the iron grillage of the gate and the falling rain. But not a Fascist . . . not one. . . .

Where do revolutions happen? I plow through the ruck back past the Piazza della Pilotta. The nine government machine-gun lorries with their revolving striped red, white, and green towers, loom indistinctly in the wet; two hundred



Part of the invading army, "Blue-Shirts"



Fascisti, Via Veneto, Rome, October 31, 1922



## THE MARCH ON ROME

white horses hang their heads in the rain; two hundred cavalrymen, guns in hand, crouch in the surrounding doorways. . . .

Here and there, in the larger courtyards of the central buildings—the Palazzo Venezia . . . the Palazzo Pamfili-Doria—I spy other detachments of cavalry, waiting . . . waiting in the rain . . . waiting for the Fascisti . . . waiting for orders from a resigned cabinet minister . . . waiting the decision of the king.

In the Piazza Venezia, in front of the long white surge of granite steps of the monument against the side of the Capitol—twenty green buses, not so very different from those that circulate on Fifth Avenue, have been stacked up against the east curbing—dismal, rain-stained in the vast empty square. . . .

In my room near the Great Forum, I take off my squashy shoes, change my trousers, and stand on the balcony, staring at the twisted drain-pipes on the rear wall of the buildings opposite—staring at the rain, without even ambition to investigate that story of twenty thousand Fascisti on the Via Nomentana. . . .

But out there, I recall vaguely, near the Mons Sacer, the seceding Plebs had camped twenty-three hundred years ago. . . . Over that road

had passed the legions of conquering Cæsars, coming to take Rome, the Eternal City, the center of the world. How many times? How many times in a year? How many times in a century?—And by that road in 1870 the troops of the house of Savoy had come to batter down the walls at Porta Pia, to found a new nation. . . .

October 29. Sunday.

Apparently nothing happened last night. But to-day the rain has ceased, and Vesuvius has broken forth—tamely enough, but no less portentously. Mussolini's first clear intonation as to his purposes has appeared in his paper of Milan, "Il Popolo":

The political authorities—somewhat surprised and greatly terrified—have not been able to cope with our movement, because a movement of this character has no limits and still less can be beaten down. The victory delineates itself as already vast, supported by the almost unanimous consent of the nation. But the victory cannot be mutilated by eleventh-hour compromises. . . . The Government must be strictly Fascist.

Fascism will not abuse its victory, but it does not

intend that it be diminished. . . . Fascism wishes to rule and will rule.

Certainly there has been no show in Rome of blocking the Fascisti, merely a half-hearted attempt to preserve order. Happening along the Via Tritone at 10:30 this morning, I came upon the Fascisti setting fire to piles of paper and subscription-lists in front of the smashed entrance of "L'Epoca." A Black-Shirt, who had touched a high-voltage wire near one of the presses, was being carried out. All the labor papers and the Nitti dailies, they say, are being sacked.

Up in the Piazza Barberini, on the site of which the historian Sallust must have looked down from his gardens, the surging, clamorous horde of Fascisti grows ever larger. They are drifting in from Florence, Perugia, Arezzo, Cittavecchia. They are coming by bicycle, motorcycle, automobile, train, aëroplane—on foot.

Crowds have gathered—restive, curious, talkative. The Fascisti are policing a long lane of people down Via Tritone, through which hurtle explosive automobiles with Black-Shirts and Blue-Shirts clutching to side, rear, and top.

Every now and then a large detachment comes quickstepping, arms outstretched in the old Roman salute, crying their Roman "*Eja . . . eja . . . eja alalà,*" flinging their song

Giovanezza, giovanezza,  
Primavera di belleza. . . .

to the time-stained walls and the clear, azure sky.

A few of these are young women . . . and they walk with snap—in black shirt-waists, tam-o'-shanters, gray skirts, and low-heeled boots. . . .

Passing down the Street of the Four Fountains between the Via Quirinale and the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, I run into a mêlée in front of a gun-store. The Fascisti have ripped up the iron shutters and are bursting out with rifles—like black bumblebees out of a shaken nest. . . . A company of gray-helmeted soldiers, rifles at the thigh, races down the hill on the double-tear, their nail-shod boots ringing on the cobbles. . . . For a moment things look ugly. . . . We crowd into the lobby of the Teatro Quattro Fontane directly across. . . . The theater-attendants stand with steel hooks

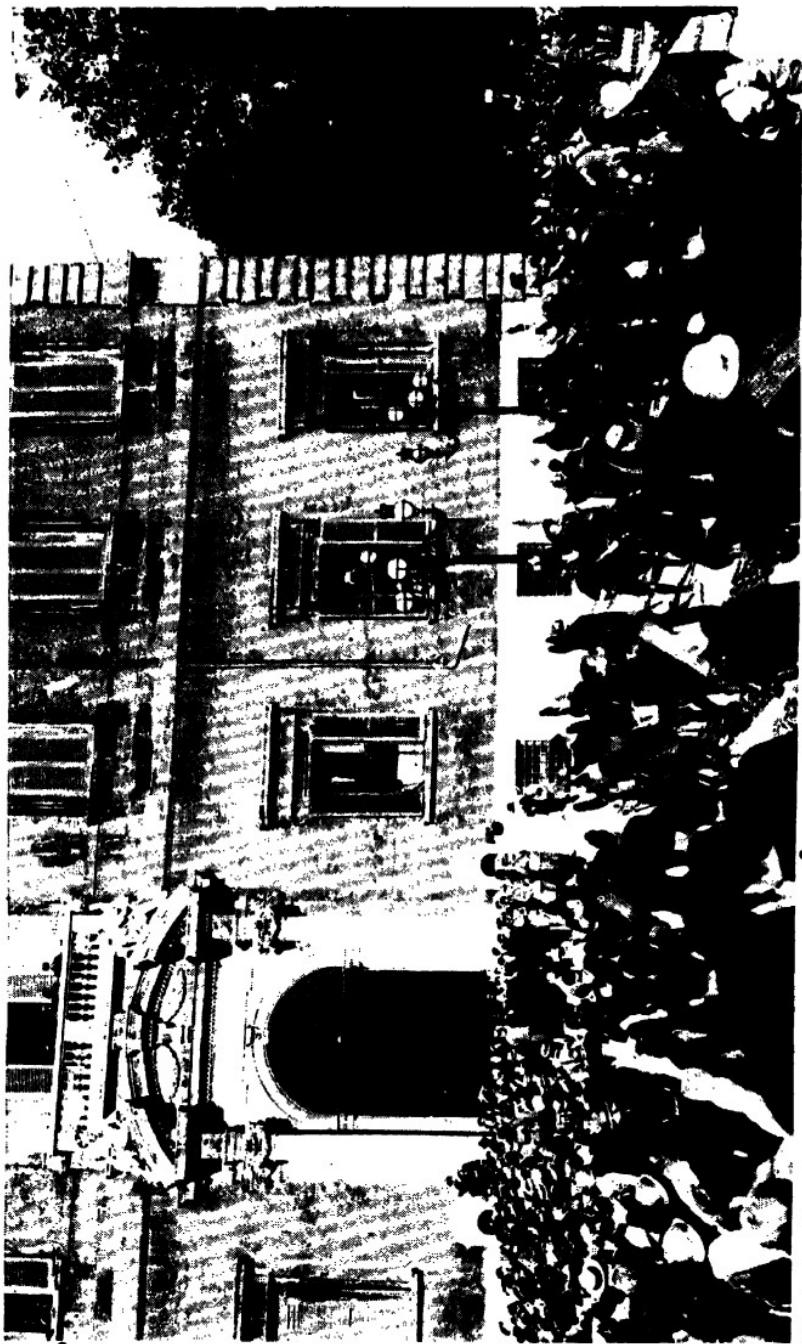


Photo by Romolo      Black-Shirts in front of the royal palace. The king is on the balcony



ready to slam down the shutters if anything serious happens. . . . But the Fascisti have their spoils . . . they have the run of the city . . . they calm down and go their way. . . .

At four o'clock the "Giornale di Roma" issues an extra announcing that the king has appointed Mussolini minister. All Rome surges into the streets, down the avenues, swirls about the gates of the Quirinal. . . .

### October 30.

More rain . . . driving over the towers of Rome . . . rattling on my balcony as I type these lines. Giornata triste! Grim October in Italy whirls to its grave.

Overhead, just clearing the roofs, circles an aëroplane through the gray mist. Mussolini has come to Rome. By grace of the king and destiny and his own genius, minister of the realm —in all but name, dictator of Italy. . . . "La paix est signée, le drame est fini," as Cavour once wrote.

That same statesman, after the formation of the Italian nation, boasted: "It has been Italy's glory to have known how to constitute herself a nation without sacrificing liberty or independence, without suffering the dictatorial

grasp of a Cromwell." Whatever enlightened benefits the new régime may bring, Italy can no longer make that boast. Constitutionalism, legality, in Italy has turned up its toes. From this day, October 30, 1922, political democracy means as little as it did under the sway of Cromwell. It makes no difference that the herd has bent the neck willingly to the new yoke. The present Chamber of Deputies, with its hurried, nervous attestations of loyalty to Fascism, has as little significance (or as much) as the Rump or Praisedgod Barebone's Parliament. If necessary, a new Pride's Purge can be invoked to eliminate the anti-Fascist deputies.

But these are trifles to be memorized in textbooks in future centuries. The significant thing: a new era has begun in Italy—as it began in Rome with the dictatorship of Sulla. The events of these last few days are a part of a European tendency that began with the Great War, embraced the Russian revolution, that may not end in our generation. . . .

This evening, passing along the narrow street leading to the Pantheon, I came upon some Fascisti swarming out of the Roman headquarters of the "Avanti," staggering under great loads of

books and furniture. These were carted down, under the eyes of the royal guards, to the fashionable Corso Umberto I, where they were heaped upon the muddy stones tracked with three days of marching and countermarching. And as the flames leaped into the twilight sky, between the medieval Palazzo Doria and the old Church of San Marcello, I read some of the torn title-pages beneath the shifting feet of the jeering crowd: Max Stirner, "The Ego and his Own"; Trotzky, "Our Revolution." . . . Yet what are these but their own gods?

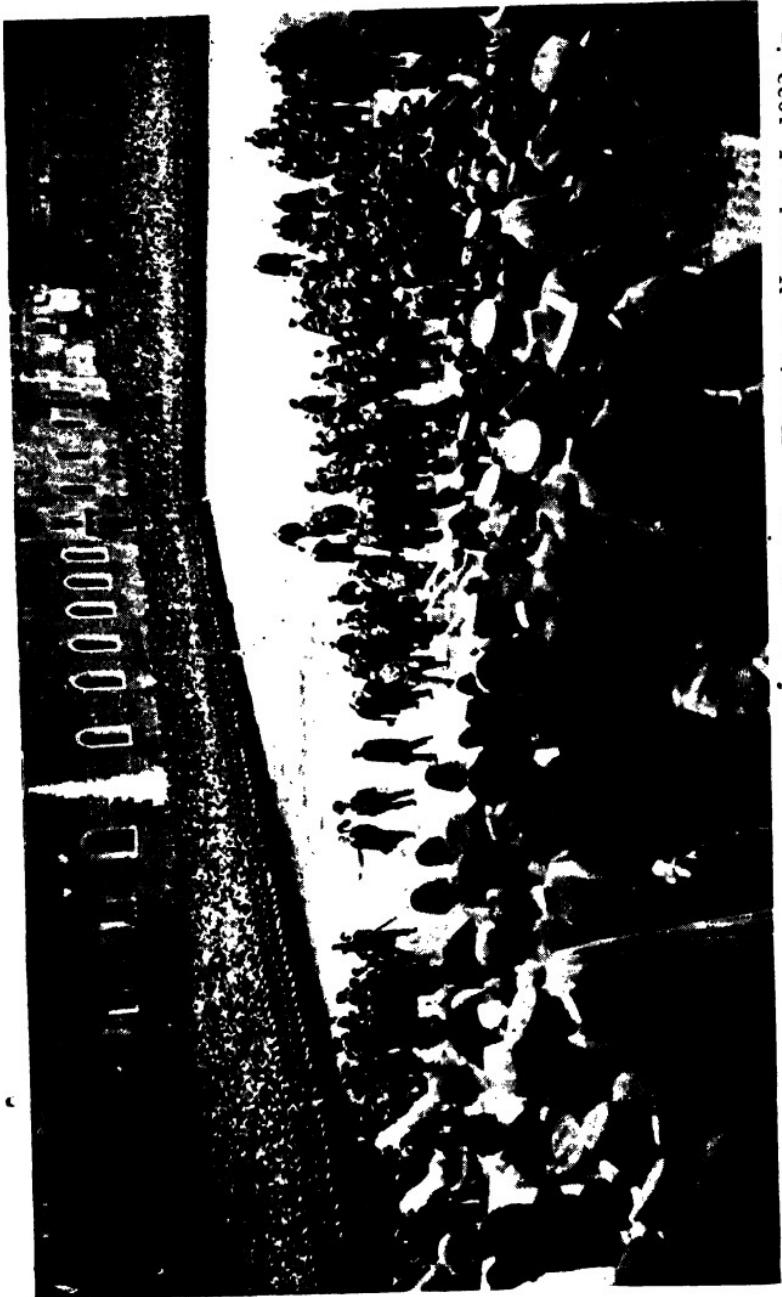
Our rooms are directly across from the Great Forum, whose shattered columns bear mute witness to the futility of human violence—and its apparent inevitability. We are also next door to the Camera del Lavoro for the province of Rome. For three nights bands of marauding Fascisti have stood outside and pumped the magazines of their rifles into the labor headquarters or have fired at the lights in the adjoining houses. Two nights ago a flower-pot on the terrazzo above us was struck—sent crashing into the air-shaft. Last night, about nine o'clock during an interval in this firing, my wife and I, being obliged to go into the city, were shot at

without warning as we stepped from the *portone*. Three times this impromptu fusillading ended with the battering in of the front entrance to the labor headquarters. While the soldiery looked on, papers, furniture, and typewriters were hurled into this narrow Street of the White Cross. This evening, even the doors and window-sashes were wrenched loose, until the edifice now stands black and raw, lit by the flickering flames from the wreckage in the cobblestones, over which the firemen, with their tiny red old-fashioned fire-engine and thin hose are casually spurting a feeble stream of water.

The furniture and records of the Republican headquarters have been burned in the Piazza Colonna across from the new white loggia and beside the pedestal of the triumphal column of Marcus Aurelius with its quaint pictorial spiral. Marcus Aurelius, that noble and well-intentioned persecutor of Christians, were he to look down from his column (where now towers a statue of Paul, a saint of the religion he despised), would doubtless find his suave and gilded philosophy quite in tune with the scene beneath his eyes.

Down the streets still hurtle armed lorries, and every gutter-snipe is abroad with the tri-





Mussolini mounting the Altar of the Country from the Piazza Venezia on November 5, 1922, in memory of the victory of the Piave

color, blood-lust in his eye, protected by his suddenly acquired black shirt, his orange collar, his skull and cross-bones symbol, and his black fez. In the theaters the Fascisti climb upon the seats to spy out and maltreat all those who fail to lift their arms in the Fascist salute or to wear the proper smile of joy over the occasion.

Running over the names in the new cabinet, I find that the majority of posts have been given to the most aggressive pro-Nationalists. How will this clique answer the progressive needs of their own nation and of the world in this hour of travail? And this evening as I stirred with my cane among the charred sheets of "Voce Repubblicana" in the Piazza Colonna, I wondered what the Facci Repubblicani di Combattimento, who comprise a large element in the Fascist movement, are thinking of Signor Mussolini's genuflections before the king at the Quirinal. What will be *their* policy? The Carthaginian peace has been imposed. But the real war, the war of ideas, has just begun. The Fascist *coup* has solved no fundamental problem.

Yet on every hand rises, like a pæan of liberation, "The New Italy!" "At last, the Fourth Rome!" One is obliged to admit that the most idealistic forces existing to-day in Italy have ral-

lied behind the symbol of the *fasces*, the weapon of the old Roman magistrate, and that in this outburst is a sincere, almost lyric desire on the part of the younger generation for a renovation of the national life. Many of the Fascist locals have taken the most severe blows of abstinence from comfort and pleasure, much after the fashion of the Young German movement. Yet, making this concession, the honest observer cannot but feel a bit of rugged Carducci's disgust when he said, "Italy has been too much intoxicated with idealism; to me a fair and well grown cabbage is a much more beautiful thing."

The press is hailing Benito Mussolini as the great chivalric Cid of Italy. Let us hope that, unlike the splendid Ruy Diaz, he does not trample under foot every dissenter. - The makers of this new Italy are far indeed from the patient and dynamic faith as Mazzini. Old war-feuds have been reawakened to bitterness; stark passions have been aroused, which a simple order for demobilization may check but not stifle. The strong state has arrived in Italy in the way the strong always arrive. For a time its origins may be obscured—by parliamentary indorsement, by fictitious elections, by the chorus of

servile journalism; but, like every strong state, it is in the rule of a militant minority. And, however strong this state, Italy is still a cockleshell in the tempestuous sea of Europe.



**PART V**  
THE FASCIST STATE



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DICTATORSHIP

THE first steps taken by Mussolini were designed to tighten his control of the governmental machinery and at the same time to inspire the country with confidence, in accordance with his theory of "the second phase of revolution."<sup>1</sup> He announced the make-up of his cabinet almost simultaneously with his *coup* and held the first official reunion a few days later. He then issued a statement to the press, promising immediate bureaucratic reform, economy, return to industrial *laissez-faire*, and a prompt solution of the emigration problem. Subsequently, he guaranteed the freedom of the press ("because the press is worthy of liberty"), discountenanced further Fascist violence, and threatened all those who should combat the new Government. He made particular efforts to allay the fears at home and abroad of any attempt to follow out immediately the Fascist foreign

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 148.

policy, though at the same time announcing that he would uncompromisingly protect Italy's interests before the world. He declared his intention of establishing Italy on a basis of equality with England and France or else breaking the alliance with those two countries.

His chief concern, however, was with regard to the armed forces of the state. General Diaz, of war fame and one of the participants in the March on Rome, was intrusted with the War Department, where he effected a quick shifting of officials. De Bono, general commander of the Black-Shirt militia, was put in charge of the police forces—the Carabinieri, the Guardia Regia, etc. Nearly all the provincial prefects and local police heads were replaced with Fascisti or Nationalists. Simultaneously, preliminary plans were outlined to reduce the police forces, on the plea of economy, and to create a new national guard.

The Chamber was permitted to reopen on November 16. Mussolini, in demanding a vote of confidence, did not mince words. After pointing out the previous inefficiency of the Chamber and the instability of the post-war cabinets, he let it be clearly understood that the fate of the Chamber was entirely in his hands, and



The first meeting of Mussolini's cabinet, November, 1922



added: "To-day it has happened for the second time in the brief space of ten years that the Italian people have upset a ministry and have imposed a Government from the outside, above and beyond any designation of Parliament. . . . I leave it to the melancholy fanatics of super-constitutionalism to discourse more or less lamentingly upon this fact. I affirm that the revolution has its rights." He went on to declare that he would defend the Black-Shirt revolution and impose it "as a force for the development of progress." He would observe proper bounds, but warned that with "three hundred thousand fully armed youths, resolved to anything, and almost mystically ready to obey my orders, I could have punished all those who defamed and attempted to throw mud at Fascism; I could have made this gray hall a bivouac of my bands. I could have closed Parliament and constituted a Government purely Fascist."

He went on to compliment the wisdom of the king and all those who had assisted Fascism, and particularly "the laboring masses for their activity or their passive solidarity," all of whom had prevented civil war. The plans for making a new Italy had long existed, but hitherto the purposefulness and the instruments for achiev-

ing them were lacking; Fascism provided the will and means. After touching lightly upon foreign affairs and promising to bring the Treaty of Rapallo and the Protocol of San Margherita before the Chamber,<sup>1</sup> he declared that Italy sought sound relations with her neighbors, but added: "We cannot permit the luxury of a policy insensately altruistic. . . . We have not the evil pleasure of exaggerating our power, but no less will we, by excessive and useless modesty, diminish it."

For internal affairs the new policy of the Government could be summed up in three words: "Economy, Labor, and Discipline." He insisted that a state was respected in proportion to its internal efficiency; that the Fascist Government intended to be strong, to show its strength to all, even against Fascist illegality . . . but that "as sermons evidently are not enough, the state will proceed to select and perfect the armed forces which it directs; the Fascist state will probably create a single police force, perfectly ordered, of great mobility, and of elevated moral

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the ratification of the Protocol of San Margherita by the Chamber (February, 1928), Mussolini was criticized for urging the adoption of a treaty which he had never lost an opportunity to denounce. His significant reply was, "Wait until we have been in power for thirty years."

spirit; while the army and the navy, glorious and dear to every Italian, will be removed from the political uncertainties of Parliament, reorganized, and strengthened. It will represent the supreme reserve of the nation at home and abroad." He closed by again threatening Parliament: "I do not wish to govern . . . against the will of the Chamber; but the Chamber should appreciate its peculiar position, which renders possible its being dissolved within two days or two years. We ask for full powers because we wish to assume full responsibility. Without full powers you know very well that there would not be one lira—I say one lira—of economy." He added that full powers did not exclude collaboration and coöperation, and suggested that Parliament make its labors brief, ending with, "Thus God will assist me in bringing to a victorious close my arduous labor."

He then appeared before the Senate, where he reassured the members that the preliminary threats of his address were directed only at the Chamber. "I should not use before the Senate the language, necessarily brusque, which I had to direct against the honorable deputies. Not merely now, but for some years, I have had the firm belief that the Senate is one of the solid

pillars of the nation. I do not consider the Senate as a superfluous institution, as it is fantastically regarded by a small number of Democrats; instead, I consider the Senate as a force of the state, as a reserve of the state, as an organ necessary for the just and wise administration of the state."

The subsequent speeches in the Chamber consisted largely of exaggerations on the part of the Fascist deputies of Mussolini's threats against that body, coupled with guarantees that if it proved recalcitrant a new election would be made "with Fascist clubs." The Liberal and Giolittian elements contented themselves with mild reservations or simulated enthusiasm; some slight doubt was expressed from the Slav and German benches; the Catholics were largely silent; a few abandoned the hall in group. Turati took up the cudgels for the Socialists, his principal argument being that his party had been more nationalist than the Fascisti—that the Fascisti had preferred a violent attack upon the sovereignty of the state to legal means. His speech degenerated into an exchange of petty recriminations with Mussolini regarding the latter's activities as editor of the "Avanti" before the war.

Out of a Chamber of 535 members, 306 were in favor of awarding the vote of confidence; 116 votes, mainly Socialist, were registered in opposition. The Catholics and Communists largely absented themselves; the Slavs and Germans abstained from voting. A resolution was then introduced to grant the Government of the king "full powers [*pieni poteri*] to reorder the finances to the end of simplifying them, to balance the budget and better distribute the tax burdens, to reduce the functions of the state, to reorganize the public offices and institutes in order to render them more efficient, to curtail expenses"; and granted until December 31, 1923, "the right to issue 'dispositions' having the force of law." During the month of March, 1924, Mussolini "will give an account to Parliament of the use of the powers conferred by the present law."

The resolution was passed on Saturday, November 25, by a vote of 215 to 80, a majority of 135 of those present. Half the membership of the entire Chamber comes to 268; 53 votes were therefore lacking to give Mussolini a true majority. Nearly half the deputies had absented themselves, either out of veiled antipathy or complete indifference—proof, in itself, that the

Chamber of Deputies, which had been declining in importance and effectiveness ever since the declaration of war in 1915, had ceased to be, in the true sense of the words, a governing body.

The second meeting of the Chamber, called on February 7, 1923, to ratify treaties, was a further indication that it had become a lump of sealing-wax for Mussolini. On this occasion Montecitorio was surrounded on the first day by an impressive detachment of newly created Black Guards. The labors of the Chamber were restricted to the ratification of foreign treaties. Mussolini declined to discuss internal affairs.

After assuming full powers, Mussolini largely centered his activities upon establishing his dictatorship by weeding out of the public services all of those upon whom any imputation of anti-Fascism might be cast. The application of the spoils system was carried down through the lowest offices. Part of this was necessary economy. Whole bureaus were wiped out; and the post-office, railway service, and the Department of Education overhauled. The administrative and teaching staffs of the schools, sadly depleted during and after the war, were so reduced by the new measures as seriously to handicap the entire system. In the railway service fifty thousand

men were ordered off—a necessary and sane reform.<sup>1</sup>

Simultaneously, steps were taken to eliminate the Guardia Regia, a body of police created by Premier Nitti consisting of forty-one thousand men. At the time of the factory seizures in 1920, Giolitti had openly declared that he could not depend upon this corps. It was supposed to be permeated with "subversive" elements. The more faithful members were now absorbed into the Carabinieri, an old and tested force. The dissolution of the Guardia Regia was not accomplished without some violence. In Turin, Naples, Florence, and elsewhere some of the barracks revolted. In Turin the revolt had to be quelled in the streets and *piazze* by the combined force of the Fascisti and Carabinieri using rifles and machine-guns.

To take the place of the Guardia Regia was

<sup>1</sup> It appears from recent attacks made upon the railway administration by the Fascist Farinacci and others that there is considerable doubt as to whether this reform was really effected. The "Corriere della Sera," the Liberal organ in Milan, in its issue of April 6, 1928, affirmed that the personnel had actually increased and that the labor cost was greater than before. The Government has encountered almost insurmountable difficulties in cutting down its pay-rolls. Thus in April it attempted to lay off twenty-four thousand workers connected with the War and Marine departments, but the attitude of the Fascist *corporazioni* caused the order to be rescinded.

organized the new militia of Black Guards, consisting of eighty thousand members. Mussolini's economy consisted of doubling the number previously existing in the Guardia Regia and appreciably increasing the strength of the Carabinieri! The new Black Guards were made responsible, not to the king, but to God and the premier. The basis of selection was known personal loyalty to Mussolini and the previous record of the candidate in the war and in the guerrilla expeditions organized against the labor headquarters and press. At the same time, all other voluntary armed groups were demobilized, including the Sempre Pronti, or Blue-Shirt Nationalists (some of which were absorbed into the new militia), the d'Annunzian legionaries (who in some cases resisted with violence), and the revolutionary Arditi del Popolo.

The principal difficulties have arisen in this connection with the Nationalists, especially in the south, where repeated conflicts have occurred between the Blue-Shirts and the Black-Shirts. After three months of continuous negotiation, an agreement was reached between the leaders of the Nationalists and Mussolini regarding the number of Blue-Shirts to be absorbed into the Black Guard militia, together with guarantees





Photo by Romano

Fascisti before the Altar of the Patria, November 5, 1922

as to the future freedom of the activities of the Nationalists. Yet friction survived in the south. No sooner had the agreement been announced than at Bernalda on February 1, 1923, occurred a battle in the streets which was later carried on from the doors and windows as the Blue-Shirts were driven to cover. Thirteen Nationalists and three Fascisti were killed and many more seriously wounded. An equally serious conflict took place at Basilicata, said by the Nationalists to have been directly inspired by Avvocato Sannanelli, one of the most prominent Fascist leaders. These conflicts have continued to crop out. In the Naples sector in June practically all the Faschi seceded because of concessions and privileges granted to the Nationalists by Mussolini and had to be proceeded against with force and compromise.

The efforts of the Government were complicated by other differences in the ranks of the Fascist party itself, and armed conflicts occurred for the possession of headquarters in Rome, Venice, Bari, and other cities. In general, the higher-ups of the party systematically disbanded the Faschi in Bari, Palermo, Vicenza, Venice, Spezzia, Leghorn—from one end of Italy to the other—and recreated them with

special attention to the personal record of each applicant. At Turin (a hotbed of Communism, which even the Fascisti in unguarded moments admit has never been "converted") not only the Fascio but the newly created militia units were dissolved. A general commission was created to investigate conditions and readmit those found worthy. Among those temporarily expelled was Pietro Gorgolino, author of a book on Fascism heartily indorsed by Mussolini and frequently quoted herein. In Gorizia not only were all the local Faschi disbanded because of internal disagreements and violence but the provincial organization itself was expelled *en bloc*. The Fascist National party has intrusted, in Sardinia and elsewhere, the reorganization of the Fascist locals to the prefects appointed by Mussolini. The organization is thus effectively subordinated to the Government's purposes and is robbed of all democratic or autonomous initiative.

As in the case of the Communist party of Russia, after the success of the revolution, the Government was obliged to concern itself about the character of its own adherents. Dictatorship, either Right, Left, or Middle, depends upon the support of a closed, rigidly disciplined, and

blindly loyal group. Toward the creating of such a group were devoted most of the energies of the "leaders" of the Black-Shirts during the first four months after the Mussolini *coup*.

Mussolini's guarantee of freedom for the press has been only partially carried out. During the first few days of the new administration a great many newspapers were seized or destroyed, such as "Paese," "L'Epoca," and all the labor papers of Rome; "Corriere della Sera" and "Avanti" of Milan; "Cittadino" of Brescia; "Gazzetta dell'Emilia" of Modena; "Corriere del Mattino" of Verona; "Lavoro" of Genoa, etc. Later most of these papers were permitted to resume publication under their own management, though some have never been reissued, among them the "Paese." While publicly expressing his belief in a free press, Mussolini exerted gentle pressure on the few papers of importance that tended to criticize. In case of disturbances, brief official reports were sent out upon which it was forbidden to enlarge. Other papers were requested to desist from printing critical material. Known anti-Fascist editors who did not show a readiness to change their views were, through secret channels of influence, forced to relinquish their editorial chairs. It

was reported that Senator Bergamini, editor of the "Giornale d'Italia," one of the most conservative and at the same time reliable publications of the capital, was thus forced out; it was well known that he was constantly harassed by various department officials. Other papers such as "Il Lavatore" of Triest have been suspended for varying periods of time.

Internal violence abated after the *coup*. However, many Fascist forays were carried on as before. One would have to go over the small local press of Italy to discover the real occurrences that took place during the five months after the revolution. The Black-Shirts, certain of official protection, carried terrible vengeance to those small villages, where, before the governmental change, they had been unable to achieve marked results. Even in larger centers acts of vandalism occurred. In Brescia a squadron of twenty-five Fascisti on January 24, 1923, invaded the Fraction of Fenili Belasi in Capriano, beat up pedestrians, shot down the streets, broke into several private homes, and sought to inflict violence upon Giovanni Trainini, the priest of the parish. In Alatri Black-Shirts invaded and devastated the circle of the Popular party; in Turin the Socialist circle of the Bor-

gate San Paolo e Cenesia was wrecked and burned. In Dro (Trentino), the Socialist band headquarters was invaded and the instruments and possessions destroyed. In Spezzia, after the assassination of the Fascist Giovanni Lubrano, head of a squadron, by an unknown hand, individual and group attacks were made upon known radicals. In Stroppiano Vercellese, the Casa del Popolo was attacked for a second time, its contents destroyed, and the roof torn off. Such violence has, however, tended to become more sporadic, and in no marked instance has it aroused armed opposition.

The attack upon Socialist and Popular officials, elected by ballot in regular elections, also continued. Mussolini issued an order that all forced resignations occurring after his assumption of power be rescinded and the officials restored to their posts. This proved a mere formality, as the resigned officials in the majority of cases refused to resume their duties because of the danger to the community that would result from Fascist incursions. In the province of Rome five members of the provincial administration resigned upon Fascist orders. In Barreggio, the municipal officials, threatened with defenestration, resigned *en masse*. In Como,

after repeated violence at the meetings of both the municipal and provincial councils, at which various officials were forced to drink castor-oil in copious quantities, both administrations gave up office. Other localities in which the popularly elected officials were obliged to resign, according to reports appearing in "L'Epoca," "Giustizia," and other papers, were: Catania, Barisciano, Micigliano, Ripatransone, Ariano di Puglia, Mugnano del Cardinale, Poglinano, Verola Nuova, Verola Vecchia, Padernello, Isola Liri, Castelforte, Minturno a Fondi, Riposto, Giarre, Nicodia Eubea, Aderno Minea, Palagonia, Pizzighetone, Paderno, Marradi, Reggello, Deliceto, Chiavara, Rapallo, Palma, Montechiaro, Ravanusa, Manduria, Monte Pagano, San Domenico, Altopascio, Massacortile, Macerata, Montelupone, Fivizzano, San Salvatore, Pozzuoli, Növenta, Villa Estense, Nebrano Cortile, San Martino, Varchi, Brentina, Pecciola, Lari, Terricciola, San Luca, Barile, Albiano, San Fior, Ponte di Piave. The Government is now considering a proposal to abolish home-rule in all communes having less than twenty thousand inhabitants. These would henceforth be administered by appointees of the minister in power, who would be invested with the ancient

title of *podestà* and would supersede elected mayors and councils.

Violence in local elections continued, but as the Communists, Socialists, and in many places the Populists refused to place tickets in the field, no occasion for disturbance arose. In Biella, where all opposition tickets were withdrawn, the Fascisti put up posters: "Electors, throw off your apathy! Electors, awake!" and a statement was made in a Fascist paper: "Who does not vote is sick. Who is sick has urgent need of castor-oil." Many voters were taken to the polls under threat of violence. And in the elections of Bologna, Pisa, and elsewhere the Fascisti brought members of opposing parties to the ballot-boxes by force; in other localities, according to the Catholic press, the Fascisti calmly filled in their own lists up to 70 or 80 per cent of the number of registered voters, and then declared the polls closed. In Busto Arisizio, after throwing the municipal officials bodily from the windows, the Fascisti made preparations for a new election by driving opposition candidates and speakers from the locality. The other parties thereupon withdrew from the contest, leaving the Fascisti in full possession of the field.

The Black Guard militia, created at the begin-

ning of the year and composed of the very persons who, before the accession of Fascism to power, had exercised their bombing and destructive tactics, naturally did little to coerce their brothers in arms. Indeed, the new Black Guards have consistently invaded the homes of former members of the Socialist and Communist parties. In order to intimidate the Chamber by stirring up popular feeling, just before its second opening on February 7 about four hundred arrests of Communists and allied elements were made, and much good ink spilled to make newspaper scare-heads. Such arrests then continued in retaliation to a pot-calls-the-kettle-black manifesto from Moscow, which said in part "that after two years of sackage, of incendiarism, and of assassination to the injury of the working class, the Fascisti have taken control of the state" and "have abolished the parliamentary régime, the liberty of the press . . . have suppressed all the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, which are concentrated in the hands of a small 'Great Council' upheld by Praetorian guards." In March Turati and Serrati, the leaders of the two Socialist parties, were arrested because of their criticisms of the administration.

. In addition to these arrests, various labor

headquarters were arbitrarily closed and the organizations ordered disbanded; as, for instance, the General Association of Turin Workers, which was founded in 1850 as a mutual benefit association and which has controlled the railway coöperative and the Coöperative Alliance of Turin. In Molinella the Socialist coöperative was arbitrarily seized by the police on a technicality and its goods sold with none of the customary legal steps. In addition to these direct attacks, there was created toward the end of January the Volunteer Railway Police, made up of Fascist workers to prevent, "in every way, fraud and robbery in the state railway service," and "to make certain that the personnel of the railways observe most scrupulously their proper duties." The real purpose, as practice subsequently disclosed, is to spy upon and intimidate those not in the inner clique of Fascism. It has been suggested that such police units be organized in all industries.

Aside from attempts to institute financial reform and to cut down the bureaucracy (and apparently the new Government has made considerable progress), the policy of the Fascist administration has revolved around:

1. National defense—the strengthening and expanding of the military forces.
2. Industry—the recreation of a state of *laissez-faire*.
3. Labor—creation of a national council of labor.

At the beginning of 1923 Mussolini instituted a sweeping reorganization of the military forces, and especially of the high command. A Supreme Council of National Defense (to be presided over by Mussolini himself) was created. Toward the end of the same month, he founded a volunteer reserve militia to consist of all those from seventeen to fifty, enlistments to be accepted and handled at the Black Guard headquarters. This volunteer militia, comparable to our National Guard, is given special training on fixed days and is subject to the same military regulations as the old Fascist Black-Shirts. It will be called into the active "service of God and the country" by the premier when he deems it necessary. The term of compulsory military training was extended to eighteen months; the standing army has been increased from 180,000 to more than 250,000. Extensive preparations are being made to develop aviation, and the merchant marine is being expanded.

The policy of industrial *laissez-faire* is being carried out in all directions. A great deal of governmental red tape has been abolished. The Government plans to turn all state industry (ultimately even the post-office) over to private hands. Even before the Fascist *coup*, the Government sought to have private capital assume the incubus of the telephones. American capitalists, looking over the ground, came to the conclusion that even if the red-tape restraints upon private industry were removed, the telephone system would have to be torn out from top to bottom. And, despite the Government's willingness to dispose of the railroads, buyers did not appear on the scene. The railways of Italy were never properly constructed; an efficient system would entail enormous expenditure. With the exception of the Po valley region, the grades are heavier than in Switzerland. The competition of water transportation cuts down freight returns; coal must be imported from other parts of Europe. Every one agrees that Italy would be benefited by pruning out the industries now under governmental control which have become hopelessly inefficient and thoroughly contaminated with bureaucratic graft.

One of the most important steps taken by Mussolini was that which abolished the Commission of Inquiry on War Expenditures, which was suddenly ordered to report to the king before December 31, 1922, and was warned that any publication of its findings would result in at least six months of imprisonment and a minimum fine of five thousand lire.

The suppression of this commission is related to the warfare between two great financial groups. In Italy four banks take the lead in promoting industrial activities: the Banco di Roma (Catholic), which supplies rural credit and helped the Government in the war against Turkey; the Credito Italiano, which abjures politics and interests itself in the manufacture of motor-cars; and those two political meddlers, the Banca Commerciale Italiana, through which flowed German capital before and since the war, which backed up the Giolittian bureaucracy in its maintenance of neutrality in 1914, and which invests in the silk and textile industries; and the Banca Nazionale di Credito (the revival of the Banco di Sconto, which collapsed in 1921), manipulating much French capital and heavily interested in steel, ship-building, and engineering works. The Banco di Sconto was controlled

by the Perrone brothers, who, during the war, by financing the Ansaldo Iron and Steel Company and other concerns, specialized in the reproduction of war materials. The Perrone interests are pro-war, pro-Fiumian, anti-Jugoslavian, pro-Fascist, pro-French, pro-imperialist.

Now the Banca Commerciale, secure and long-established in the profitable indigenous textile industry and in control of the governmental machinery, fearing the efforts of the steel and automobile interests to create high protective tariffs, struck at the Credito Italiano through excessive luxury taxes on automobiles and at the Banca Italiano di Sconto by means of numerous post-war investigating commissions. The chief of these was to examine into the matter of war expenditures, which, according to the directors of that bank and Ansaldo, was responsible for the general financial collapse of these and allied corporations; though post-war conditions would have made this inevitable in any event unless it had been forestalled by governmental backing.

The Banca Commerciale Italiana people also tacitly supported the general strike in 1919 against the Peace of Versailles—the first serious labor blow at the inflated Perrone industries. It is intimated that much of Giolitti's "neutral-

ity" at the time of the factory seizures was based on similar reasons.

The Perrone people fought back, taking advantage of the rising tide of national sentiment coalescing into Fascism; they bought up newspapers, "Il Messaggero" of Rome and its allied chain of dailies, subsidized the "Idea Nazionale" and other publications, and started a publicity campaign recounting the patriotic services of Ansaldo during the war.

But the governmental drive of the Banca Commerciale was successful. The Banco di Sconto was accused of grave irregularities and misuse of funds, and collapsed. Its officials were placed on trial. The Cornigliano Ligure ironworks went into bankruptcy. Ansaldo was reorganized and ultimately reduced its capital from half a billion lire to five million lire.

The Fascist counter-drive changed the complexion of affairs. The Perrone brothers promptly announced their support of the new régime by proffering Mussolini, according to reports in the commercial papers, a billion lire with which to rehabilitate the railways, with the understanding that these be ultimately turned over to private management. Certainly Musso-

lini, before and since the *coup*, conferred with the Perrone brothers, and is generally believed to be in sympathy with their efforts. In addition to suppressing the Commission of Inquiry into War Expenditures, Mussolini decided, "in view of the patriotic efforts of the Banca Commerciale di Sconto and the Ansaldo Iron and Steel Works during the war," to quash the charges against the officials of the bank and reinstate them in charge of the new Banca Nazionale di Credito. This will mean that Ansaldo, and the iron and steel industry in general, is put back upon its feet (not by *laissez-faire*) as part of the Black-Shirt program of military preparedness. The Perrone brothers, in an open letter<sup>1</sup> attacking the machinations of the opposing industrial interests, took occasion to express their "immense satisfaction" that the government was putting the Cornigliano Ligure Works once more in a state of "full efficiency."

The general results of *laissez-faire* policy struck most seriously at the peasants. The Visocchi land decree with its amendments, and the resultant law<sup>2</sup> side-tracked by the Fascist *coup*, were meant not only to help the peasants

<sup>1</sup> Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> "Il Messaggero," March 21, 1928.

but to offset alarming decreases in the cereal output. One of the first acts of the new Fascist minister of agriculture, de Capitani, was to abolish the Visocchi Decree with its amendments. "Under a free economic régime," he declared, "production will be increased." The proprietors, who live in Palermo, in Rome, in Paris, in London, are to be permitted unrestricted liberty. In other words, they can again give the *gabellotti* free hand. They can again rent their property out to sheep-herders despite the national needs for increased cereal production. They can again delay to introduce any scientific methods, to develop uncultivated lands, or to make urgent improvements. They can again let their lands lie fallow in order to starve the peasants into submission. But Italy, all-dependent on her soil, cannot afford an unscientific, antiquated absentee system. The abolition of the post-war land decrees and a reversion to such a system was indeed an auspicious beginning for the Fascist founders of "an enlightened, efficient, and modern state!"

The parliamentary *bloc* of agrarian proprietors (twenty-five in number), who had earlier stated their purpose to be that of "conciliation between the Red and White elements," promptly

dissolved itself, announcing that the *bloc* had "exhausted its duties and that each member should resume his post in whichever group he preferred, in order to give more effective aid to the work of the new National Government."

De Capitani's action in abolishing the Visocchi Decree has already had its repercussions. All Sicily is bitterly anti-Fascist and numerous disturbances have occurred. In May street-riots took place in Messina and about fifty persons were arrested, including Deputy Lombardo Pellegrini.

In the labor field Mussolini attempted to effect his plan of taking industrial and labor questions out of the hands of Parliament by creating a new technical Council of Labor and Production. This was hailed as Mussolini's great original contribution to the cause of industrial peace and progress.

It was, in reality, an efficiency reform of previously existing agencies. The National Superior Council of Labor was instituted by the Zanardelli Law of 1902 with advisory powers. It was composed of forty-four members drawn from the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, the Chambers of Commerce, from the Mutual Benefit Federation, the coöperative leagues, the pop-

ular banks, and the governmental departments pertaining to labor, emigration, credit, social insurance, etc. It was empowered to examine into questions concerning relations between capital and labor and to suggest measures for the improvement of working conditions. In 1910 an extensive organic reform of the council was proposed, but this was delayed because of the war. Directly after the armistice, the General Federation of Labor (through Deputy Bianchi) insisted upon the complete reorganization of the body so as to make it directly representative of the workers and employers and to give it direct deliberative powers. This and another proposal were lost sight of owing to the rapid ministerial shifts. After the downfall of Nitti, when Giolitti returned to power, the latter's minister of labor, Labriola, presented (November, 1920) a new plan to the Chamber. His action, while not appreciably extending the powers of the council, created two sections, one for labor and commerce, the other for agriculture, the representatives to be elected by the proportional system directly from the association of proprietors (one vote for every one hundred employers) and from the federated unions (one vote for every fifteen members). Signor Bene-

ducci, who succeeded Labriola as minister of labor, gave the council more extended deliberative powers and created a superior organ to settle conflicts between the council and Parliament.

Mussolini definitely suppressed this old Superior Council of Labor, superseding it with the presumably original and epoch-making National Council of Labor and Production. This unified and superseded some seven commissions and bureaus, but its powers are limited to the right of proposing to the Government any reforms concerning capital and labor or for the better functioning of industry; it is to furnish advice on all legal projects that interest labor and the various branches of production, and may investigate labor and industrial conditions.

In the bosom of the council functions a permanent committee, as well as a commission of conciliation to settle differences between employers and employees whenever called upon to do so by the minister of labor or the interested parties.

The council proper is composed of three sections: agriculture; private industry and transportation; commerce, credit, and insurance.

The agrarian section is composed of twelve representatives of the proprietors and farm-man-

agers; six representatives of the small proprietors and cultivators; six representatives of wage-workers, of peasants, small renters, and the farm colonies; and six experts.

The section for industry and transportation has twenty-eight employers, twenty-eight workers, and six experts.

The section for commerce, credit, and insurance is made up of eleven employers, eleven employees, and four experts.

Six authorities upon economic science and jurisprudence sit in an advisory capacity on all three sections.

The permanent committee consists of eleven members (six employers and six employees, presided over by the president of the council).

On the conciliation commission workers and employers are equally represented.

These various members are appointed by royal decree on the recommendation of the minister of labor in concert with the ministers of industry, commerce, and agriculture, who must give heed to the suggestions of the principal organizations of workers and employers. The council will endure one year from the date of its creation, and then will be renovated on the basis of new rules for the appointment of members.

The new council will have no organic connection with Parliament, though this is scarcely necessary so long as the dictatorship endures. It has no truly organic relation with either employers or employees. Proportional representation is abolished. Socialist and Communist unions are denied representation.

The first months of Mussolini's dictatorship bear a striking similarity to the ten-year period in which Augustus Cæsar gradually assimilated the supreme powers of the Roman Empire. Augustus successfully gained control of the consulate, the proconsulates, the tribunical prerogatives, the exchequer, the army; he promoted senatorial prestige while at the same time superseding its members with persons loyal to himself; he built up and maintained a personal body-guard.

In the short space of three months, Mussolini secured "full powers" and control of finances (taxation and disbursement); reduced Parliament to a convenient rubber stamp; increased the prestige of the Senate, while at the same time diluting it with newly appointed Fascisti and Nationalists; built up a hand-picked group of personal followers—a Praetorian Guard—armed and paid for by the state; assumed direct control

of the army and navy; curtailed the efficiency and importance of previously existing police units; ruthlessly eliminated officials not avowedly pro-Fascist; reduced all the important parties to the position of sublimated official spittoon-polishers and boot-lickers. No individual since Robespierre and Napoleon has exercised such direct, unrestricted, and omnipotent powers over a people, for in Russia there is a duumvirate resting on the more or less secure subsoil of the Communist party. In contrast to this there has come about a gradual reawakening of party opposition. The Socialists have become less veiled in their criticisms. The great Liberal daily of Milan, the "Corriere della Sera," against which Mussolini hardly dares take action, consistently reiterates its faith in liberalism and democratic processes. The national convention of the Popular party held this April in Turin, while showing a definite split into pro-Fascists, collaborationists, and anti-Fascists, resulted in a tacit victory for the last group and for Don Sturzo, the founder of the party, who in his new Rome daily, the "Popolo," has steadfastly maintained a critical attitude toward the dictatorship. The conclusions of the Turin convention brought about the resignation of the Popularist members

of the cabinet and their substitution with Fascist partisans, thus further narrowing Mussolini's control. On the whole, Mussolini has run with the hares and hunted with the hounds; he has blurred issues, played into the hands of France, and destroyed some of the most enlightened legislation of the post-war. It remains to be seen whether his power, at bottom based upon an extreme minority of personally loyal armed forces, and without a broad economic or social foundation, can endure in a modern state. If it does endure, it still remains to be seen what use he will ultimately make of it.

Fascism itself represents a tendency much broader than the dictatorship would at present indicate. Fascism, at bottom, has been a belated revolt of the trenches and has been blind, ugly, sinister, idealistic, exalted. In method and thought it has not been able to rise above its muddied source. It represents a great outlet of emotion and bitterness. It has a vast disillusionment in political democracy and representative government as now organized, and on the other hand it is a disillusionment in the millennium of communism. It is a nationalist reaction against the governmental and social chaos of Europe and of Italy. Theoretically it would establish a ré-

gime of efficient collaboration and solidarity in industry and in society. It is doubtful whether such a régime can be established by force any more than the world was made democratic by war. Actually, Fascism is a turbid stream pitching down to the unknown sea of the future, the future not merely of Italy but of Europe, and the course it will follow is neither direct nor previsioned.

Fascism has created the New Italy in an old, very old Europe—an Italy caught up in the vicious circle of isolated policy, depleted resources, financial bankruptcy, and expanding militarism; an Italy strangely imbued with a hierachal spirit of Prussian sun-worship, yet lacking the temperamental restraint and lacking both the organizing ability and the industrial skill successful to carry out a policy of aggrandizement; an Italy which, in spite of all logic, intends sooner or later to batter on the closed gates of the Mediterranean. This is the New Italy, which only yesterday weltered in corruption, disorganization, and chaos, which to-day has found a new faith in the "right of the strong." For Fascism is backed by good bayonets, and Fascism is a new weight flung in the balance of European politics. Some day, somehow, the eclec-

tic, hazy, mystic idealism of Fascism may be salvaged. But at present the new Italy marks one more milestone upon the road toward the general decay of political democracy in Europe.



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